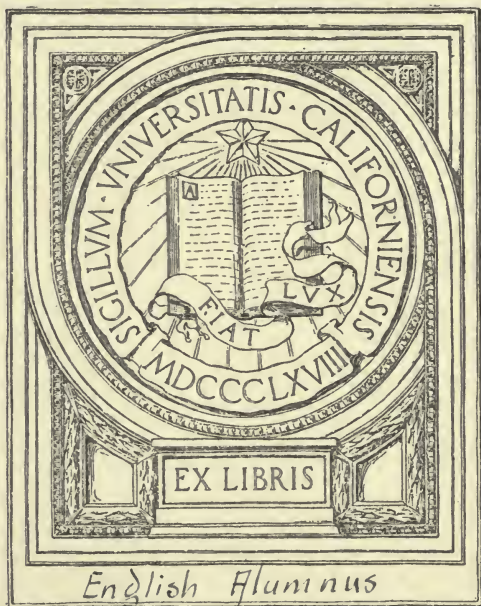




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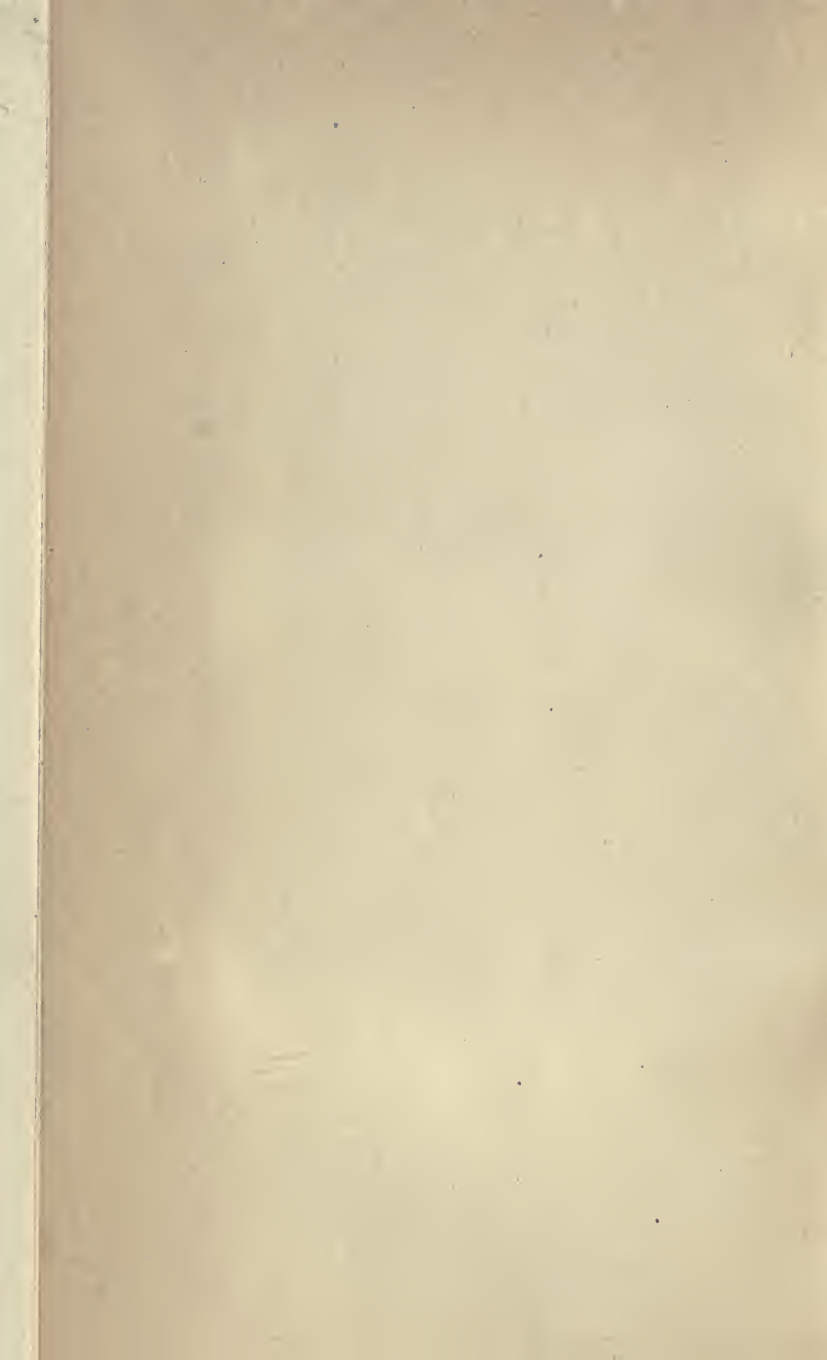


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THE ACCUSER

‘IT’S PAST THE SIZE OF DREAMING’

THE
BIBLICAL
ARCHAEOLOGY

THE BIBLE AND THE
ARCHAEOLOGY

THE BIBLE AND THE
ARCHAEOLOGY

THE
ALABAMA



THE ACCUSER
TRISTAN DE LÉONNOIS
A MESSIAH

THE
AMERICAN

1900

1900

1900



THE ACCUSER
TRISTAN DE LÉONNOIS
A MESSIAH

BY THE AUTHOR OF

‘BORGIA’

Michael Field, pseud.

LONDON
SIDGWICK AND JACKSON, LTD.
3 ADAM STREET, W.C.

1911

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P R E F A C E

THE author of these books of drama is dead. He had been slowly dying for some years : then, of a sudden, he started on a journey of desire to Rome, that he might reach it before he died. Soon after his arrival death came ; and he is buried in an uninscribed grave under Roman cypresses. He had always said he should go to Rome to die ; and he carried out his dream with his will. Before starting he had revised and printed most of the work he felt he had but short time to care for. It is probable he intended to issue the two volumes at different times : the weight of circumstance has compelled the friend, who is now acting for him, to publish at once all the work that lay in sheets or was still in the Press.

Among the papers left at home a sketch was found of a play entitled *The Temple*, designed to complete the Herodian series, that began with *Mariamne*, published in 1908, and was continued in *The Accuser*, among the plays now published. The unfinished play dealt with the effort of Herod Agrippa to preserve the Jewish Temple from the pollution of a

statue of Caligula, set up to be worshipped as divine. It promised a vivid presentation of the mad Emperor. The sketch found was incomplete, but it is believed that a complete, but unrevised, copy is in existence. The author was so secret in all his ways, almost stealthy, that hidden manuscripts may be found, like a squirrel's hoard; they may even be lying forgotten in some publisher's drawer.

The subject of Tristan always had for the author of *Borgia* a haunting incitement. He felt he could treat the story from many points of view. Two essays of varied interpretation are to be found in these volumes, and were set in separate volumes by the dramatist himself.

So intense was his desire to be nameless that those to whom his memory is a force on their love cannot bring themselves to divulge a personality so guarded from discovery.

The friend who writes this note is as unskilled in words as Horatio; but, unlike Horatio, has had no charge to tell the story of Hamlet, no injunction to speak out anything of truth before that breadth of finality:

‘The rest is silence.’

THE ACCUSER

ERRATA

THE ACCUSER

Page 16, line 4, *for* 'my love,' *read* 'your love.'

Page 47, line 17, *for* 'Aristobulus,' *read* 'Alexander.'

Page 61, line 18, *for* 'if no patience,' *read* 'of no
patience.'

PERSONS

HEROD THE GREAT, King of Judea.

ANTIPATER, his eldest son.

ALEXANDER, } His younger sons, the children of Mariamne.
ARISTOBULUS, }

AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, Emperor of Rome.

TERO, a Councillor.

CORINTHUS, his son.

SHEMIAH, }
BABBAS, } Other Councillors.
NICHOLAUS, }

A CENTURION.

A CONDEMNED CRIMINAL.

A JAILER.

DORIS, an Arabian, Herod's first wife.

SALOME, Herod's sister.

THE ACCUSER

ACT I

SCENE

Jerusalem : a room in the King's house, giving on a marble terrace, which is seen through columns of marble. Pomegranate-trees, in blood-red flower, stand formal along the terrace ; scarlet curtains are looped back with purple cords against each column.

HEROD *leans over the terrace eagerly, paces it several times, and then looks out still more eagerly. After a while, he turns from the parapet and faces the room, his hands wrapped in his purple robe.*

HEROD. Accused—

How freshly in my heart, as spring accuses
Some winter morn with all her windy light !
Accused . . . that I have left
My first-born son behind me with my youth,
Antipater, my Arab ! Almost Roman
My sons by Mariamne, and they mock me
A little for the wildness in my heart,

This wildness growing wilder now in age,
When all the deserts spread their boundaries.

My Arab son—

And reared as I was reared, and of my race,
And shy . . . oh, that will be a bond . . . my
Arab !

*[Perceiving his sister, who enters and
prostrates herself before him.]*

Salome !

SALOME. Herod, and a suppliant too,
And of the moment's opportunity,
And pleading by the pressure of the moment.
Are you not watching for your Arab son,
Antipater, and, wistful as a lover,
Roving from column on to column ?

Give me

My Arab lover, Herod, though he may not
Become a Jew, lest he be stoned to death
By his own people . . .

Say that I am old
And in the shadow—but he seeks my shade,
As it were comfort from the noontide sun !
Give him to me, and for my sole delight,
As his delight is in me.

HEROD. No, Salome.

Two generations of our father's blood
Part us alone from Arab heathendom :
We must be Jewish in our nuptials, and
Our offspring Roman in the breath they draw.

SALOME (*from the ground*). For whom, my brother,

For whom are your eyes listening, as the lights
In a roused lion's face?—Antipater,
The child of Doris, the Arabian Doris,
Daughter of Esau with red-threaded hair,
Doris, whom you abandoned. . . .

HEROD. Ay, abandoned . . .

And drew a roseleaf of God's rose, as amber
Draws such a roseleaf, to my heart—as amber,
Drew the red roseleaf Mariamne, Peace!

[ALEXANDER and ARISTOBULUS enter
along the terrace.

Her children! Ah, their names, the royal names,
Aristobulus, Alexander. . . .

[SALOME rises sullenly. HEROD involun-
tarily makes a movement toward the
young men. SALOME draws back to
the parapet of the terrace, where HEROD
had before been keeping watch.

ALEXANDER (*advancing*). Father,

You called us?

HEROD. No.

ALEXANDER. Our names—I heard our names!

HEROD. I did not call.

ALEXANDER. And yet I heard my name, I heard my
brother's,

I heard . . .

HEROD. Eavesdropping!

ALEXANDER. No!—Not that . . . her name.

You spoke it, father, as you loved its measure.

[*There is silence.*

ARISTOBULUS. And you did call us, father.

HEROD.

No—

Come here, you have not kissed me.

[He takes ARISTOBULUS' face in his hands.]

Like your uncle,

The priest, your uncle . . .

[He stops speaking and dreams.]

Kiss me, Alexander ;

But kiss me. . . . And you heard your mother's name ?

Fie, you were listening ! Go !

[The young men pass down the terrace between the pomegranate-flowers and the red curtains.]

. . . Her obstinate, still death—shut in her doom,
As water locked up in chalcedony !

[Turning toward SALOME.]

Is he not like his mother ?

Ha, these pictures

Of the dead that loved us so, these living things

That do not love us ! And the beauty cold

And stubborn on their faces. Mariamne !

—That was the name I called.

SALOME (*advancing quickly and again kneeling*).

Your watcher, Herod !

Antipater is here ! Now my reward !

Oh, joy ! This is a portent and precursive—

Behind, at your recall, there is my lover. . . .

HEROD. I will not see that laughter in your eyes,

That rich cajoling for another. Wistful
Be you to please me! Greet Antipater! . . .
Tell me a little; you have seen him. Speak!
Is his hair silvered?

A Eunuch enters

EUNUCH. Sire,
The young prince from the East world come to
you.

HEROD. Bring the young prince.

[Exit Eunuch.]

[HEROD watches the door. As the curtain opens, SALOME, after making in vain a gesture of suppliant appeal, moves away from HEROD. She meets ANTIPATER, who bows low, but she turns from him, sweeping her cloak away from him, and goes out. ANTIPATER stands in the midst of the room.]

HEROD. My son—your father!

ANTIPATER.

Majesty!

[He prostrates himself.]

HEROD.

Your father!

Stand! Let me know you.

[ANTIPATER rises and faces the King.]

. . . Seasoned! In my dreams

I saw you as a lad, Antipater;
Not of my height, my building in the frame,
And round the eyes and temples mastership.
Thin! You have hunted daily?

ANTIPATER (*with a smile*). Ibexes,
Wild asses, the gazelle . . .

HEROD. And your gazelle-hounds,
Had one of them my name ?

ANTIPATER. No, Majesty, your name
Was never lightly heard : or by the hearth,
Or by the fountain of the sands, or under
The shadow of the night-clouds, ever whispered ;
I heard it, and I feared it, Majesty.

HEROD. You had protection ?

ANTIPATER. Obodas,
King of Arabia, fed us. In his wars
I was made warrior—all my camel-droves
Caught from their pastimes on spear-rattling
nights.

HEROD. Mature of body and of wits provided
And sharpened for the pinch. . . . You have
loved women ?

ANTIPATER (*again with a smile*). All must have some
suspension, Majesty,
Some respite in the hollows of the sand. . . .

HEROD. You bring no wife ?

ANTIPATER. Great Majesty, no wife—
My filial love
From the far-vanishing, the unblest plains :
Although I drank you as a legend there,
Although my mother told me of your youth,
Although upon the desert was your name.

HEROD. My name upon the desert ? Oh, the shrill,
Shrill solitudes !

You must not speak so fast,
As crowding up the entry of my brain :
If a long throng
Of loaded dromedaries pass the gate,
They must file two and two, not all at once.
She told you of my youth : there let me linger !

[*Repressing* ANTIPATER.

No, no ! Her voice
Soft as the flow of spices—hush !—
Do not break on me your impetuous voice,
A hurricane of that sweet spice . . .

[*He looks at ANTIPATER, as if gauging the years.*

She is dead ?

ANTIPATER. Dead !—waiting duteous at your palace-door,

Waiting that in her eyes she may receive
Again the mirror of your eyes, and then
Home to her grave . . .

The years are falling on her heavily.

HEROD. The way is very long for her !

ANTIPATER.

But swifter

She travelled than my swiftness and more eager. . .

HEROD. She must go back. What should she do
among us—

Among the Mariamnes of to-day,
Young wives, fresh voices ? My Antipater,
Being your mother, I must prize her so
As the green sacred jade, no longer quarried.
She must be hidden.

ANTIPATER (*bending low*). At your pleasure, lord,

She will return . . . by stages very slow . . .

Without my aid. . . . That will not trouble her,

My lord, for she approaches to the shrine

Of a dear idol : let her snuff your image,

Fondle your feet, and creep back to the desert.

HEROD. She told you of my youth. . . . Have you
yet found

The thing she said, Antipater ?

ANTIPATER.

My lord,

I am the thing she told me of—your son.

She has reared me for you, father ; for your
pleasure.

Each hour I passed beside her was religious.

By heart she knew your first campaign—the
marching

On Idumæa, held with three thousand foot,

Four thousand horse. . . . The push toward Galilee,

Its garrisons. The city Sepporis

Seized as by magic in a wondrous snow :

The sudden fight with robbers, the defeat,

And then your left wing bearing down their right,

So that they fled. . . .

HEROD. The left wing of my army—No, my right.

No, no ! . . . But fetch her in !

[ANTIPATER *glides out*.

How marvellous

She should remember—and the critical,

Grave point forgotten ! . . .

[ANTIPATER *brings in* DORIS : *she falls at*

HEROD'S feet. *Her veil is thrown back, and a woman with terrible head-dress is revealed.* HEROD recoils. A low voice is heard.

DORIS. Is he not fair, our son ?
Is he not wrought to your desire ? My lord,
Your blessing on him, yea,
Your blessing on your first-born !

[HEROD sets ANTIPATER at his right hand.

He will guard you
From all your enemies ; no fear that any
In secret any more shall trouble you.
Now may I speak a little to my lord
Of what this is to me to see his face ?

[DORIS gazes up : there is a long silence.

Blessing it is to me to see your face !

HEROD (*uneasily*). You are not dazzled ? . . . And
it is not seemly

That you should look upon a King so long . . .

Doris, for I am King of Jewry now . . .

You must not . . . We are aged : time is between us,

And I would spare you, Doris. It afflicts me
To see your darkened cheeks.

What do you see ?

DORIS. I see all that you bid me see—the King.

Before a crown

Was on your head I saw it on your head !

And it is not so high as I have seen it,

Nor are the gems so bright.

HEROD. Your eyes are bright, your eyes that were
my gems,

Your eyes are brightening on me, and your face
Is still as a still pool when stubbornly

It shapes in its unruffled depths the sun.

Doris, I thrust you to Arabia,

So, in such youth. . . . What in Arabia

Has been your fate ?

DORIS. Herod, to guard our son.

HEROD. You had no second husband, when, still
handsome,

My little one, I left you ?

DORIS. I was Doris,

I was a flower, and the flower fades, my lord :

You must not vex yourself that I am old.

HEROD. Depart, go home, go from my presence home !

Salute your son.

[DORIS, *without a glance at ANTIPATER,*
clings to HEROD.

DORIS. Your feet !

[*Then she rises, veiling herself, and moves
away, as if set toward the desert.*

HEROD (*nodding*). Farewell ! . . .

Antipater,

This is a royal creature, of the wisdom

There should be found in woman, of the beauty

That is eternal in her. Royal, royal !

And she shall be the first among my wives.

Antipater, my first-born, draw her to me !

[ANTIPATER *runs after his mother and leads her back.*

Sit, Doris, sit beside me, and our son
Thus on the lower step at my right hand.
Now I am made secure, now at the last
I shall draw even breath.

[Suddenly rising from his throne.

Ho, eunuchs !

Several enter

Bring me

A fanlike robe of state ; bring me the chain
Of amethysts, a pearl by every grape ;
And golden shoes and female crown of gold.
Some others call

The Princes to an audience instantly.

*[ANTIPATER has lifted a hem of HEROD'S
rich robe, and has been staring at the
jewels.*

You catch my cloak—what is it ?

ANTIPATER *(quickly dropping the cloak)*. Your protection !

*[The royal dress is brought in and laid
on DORIS.*

HEROD. Queen over every other queen !

*[The young men ALEXANDER and ARIS-
TOBULUS re-enter, but draw back.*

My sons,

Come to my feet and make obeisance here
To this my wife and Queen restored to me ;
Then from my hand receive your brother's hand,
My eldest, much-loved son's. Antipater,

Your younger brothers . . . Alexander this,
Aristobulus this.

ALEXANDER. I know

Nothing of what you say . . .

Father, I cannot
Touch what is strange, and give away the name
I call Aristobulus. . . . And this lady!—
O father, I have counted every grape
And every pearl she wears about her neck,
When I was in the Queen my mother's arms.
She wears that robe . . . the very robe
My grandmother has worn, Queen Alexandra,
Worn by my mighty ancestress her mother,
And by my mother of the royal race.
One day for this
May she be dressed in sackcloth and be shut
So close that she may never see the light
That comes by the sun's shining! . . .

O my brother,
This woman is a crow that trails the glory,
Our mother wore, before her children's eyes.

[HEROD, *who has listened with growing
admiration on his face, steps down to*
ALEXANDER.

HEROD. Mariamne!

(*Softly in his ear.*) Oh, beware!

My Alexander,
You are all mine, my creatures from your birth,
To raise and to set down even as I will:
You breathe upon this earth but of my will.

I love you, Alexander—bow to that
As to an empire ; to that eagle-ensign,
I stream above you, bow !

This agèd Queen,

This brother from the desert—circumstance,
Nothing for you to stir against ! My love
An empire over you.

[ALEXANDER sobs on his father's shoulder.

Child, by your race

Of kings, and by the charge of you that Cæsar
Took side by side even with the world itself,
Do homage to your lord's authority,
Your father's. Show to this old Queen respect.
Antipater, come here ! Receive this hand.

ANTIPATER. I am in such amazement even as
you :

Forgive me that I breathed before your birth,
Who never thought to see your faces, brothers.

[To ARISTOBULUS.

But as bewildered and as in the dark,
Let our hands touch, by the King's Majesty,

[ARISTOBULUS silently gives his hand.

HEROD, taking ALEXANDER'S, lays it
in ANTIPATER'S. At the touch of ANTI-
PATER'S fingers ALEXANDER lifts his
head, his eyes flash into ANTIPATER'S,
and he snatches back his hand.

As in the dark. . . .

HEROD (to his Eunuchs). Lead forth
Queen Doris, of the Women's Palace Queen.

We all salute her.

[ANTIPATER *kisses her hand*; HEROD
leads her down the steps of the throne;
ALEXANDER and ARISTOBULUS *slightly*
incline as she is led out.

Sons,

We shall all hunt together in three hours.

Your brother is a cunning hunter—ibex,

Wild asses, and gazelles he has hunted daily.

(*To ANTIPATER.*) Have you set chetahs on gazelles,
my son?

I have often loosed a chetah . . .

[ALEXANDER and ARISTOBULUS *have*
moved away down the terrace between
the pomegranate-flowers and blood-red
curtains. HEROD *turns from ANTI-*
PATER.

Gone!

ANTIPATER *laughs low.* HEROD *shrugs*
his shoulders, and, putting an arm
round ANTIPATER, moves away down
the room.

ACT II

SCENE

A large, pillared hall, toward evening. Enter HEROD and AUGUSTUS CÆSAR through an archway at the far end of the hall. They come forward talking, and stand together in the midst of the hall.

HEROD. Loved of Cæsar !

And this from Cæsar's lips, in Cæsar's action—

Have you not given me gifts,

Trachon, Batania, and Auranitis,

With power upon my kingdom that my choice

Confirm it to what heir I yearn unto ?

Cæsar, on my new land,

At Panium, of white stone of Zenodorus,

Above the cavern magically deep,

Prodigiously abrupt, full of still water,

A temple shall be reared, guarding its symbol,

That fulness of still water, and to you

The temple shall be votive. Loved of Cæsar !

CÆSAR. With all the world to choose, his foremost
choice !

HEROD. But, Cæsar, you

Who are as foster-father to my sons,
Who are to me almost a foster-father,
Enlarge the borders of my love, receive
This stranger son, this likeness of me made
So far away in youth. Admit him, Cæsar,
Among my offspring to an equal place.

CÆSAR. Not with the royal children—no !

HEROD. Augustus, but the progeny is mine,
They are all mine and of the royalty
Conferred of Rome inherit.

CÆSAR.

You forget
The Asmonæan blood ; the royal gift
To Mariamne's children, you forget.
Herod, if I could soften you ! Your heart
Is rebel to her sons.

HEROD.

But Alexander
Makes no contention for my love . . .
He and his brother are in league together.
They do not walk away from me—their absence
Is a discovery that tempts pursuit.
Prove me this love of which there is no proof,
Prove me my children's love ! That they love you
Leaps to the eye ; that they adore their mother :
That they are careful to displease me
In every action, that they pass from me
As the stars pass at dawning from the heavens.
Yet am I never left ! My first-born son,
Whose mother from his birth was sure and faithful,
Is ever in my presence, at my side.

Achieve him with your favour !

*[An arrow is shot through one of the left
arches, in front of HEROD and CÆSAR.*

*ANTIPATER runs in, but drops his bow,
seeing his father and CÆSAR.*

CÆSAR.

Is the palace

A ruined theatre, or a ruined temple,

This most uncourtly hunter pierces through ?

Antipater, King Herod

Desires for you a place among your brothers.

See that the place rank high !

*[ANTIPATER prostrates himself. There is
silence.*

HEROD. Is this the boon, Antipater ?

ANTIPATER.

My father,

In these wide halls, and many coming in,

And many going out,

The footsteps but bewilder me. There is

One footprint to my track, and one conception ;

I am my father's son ; King Herod's son.

Hold, hold me here ! How should I profit Cæsar,

How, exile, dwell at Rome who from my desert

Looked upon mortals as a cavalcade

Of perilled merchants ? Keep me at your side,

Close as your shade, supreme in confidence,

And with no other hope to my ambition

Than to remain supreme.

HEROD (*stooping to kiss ANTIPATER*). He fills the eye.

Look on him, Cæsar, look, how duplicate

I live in him !

CÆSAR. The young man has your voice,
As musk, they say, carried a thousand miles,
Will permeate that thousand miles, betrayed,
As musk, in the rich currents of the sea.
Herod, an irresistible appeal !
(*Shrugging his shoulders.*) Let us to Nicholas to
see the scripts.

[CÆSAR moves up the hall.]

HEROD (*lingering behind CÆSAR, to ANTIPATER*).
Put by the arrows ! Are you still a child ?
Quiver the arrows ! Lay them by !
I cannot hatch you into princeliness,
As ostriches by looking at their eggs.
For shame, Antipater !
(*Joining CÆSAR.*) The scripts are written
In choicest Greek—all I have done, and all
That I, at price of labour, have erected,
With thoughts that turn towards hope. But
you shall read.

[*Exeunt.*]

A hissing shriek breaks from ANTIPATER

ANTIPATER. He is ashamed . . . Ho, ho, he hates
me ! I am dispersed, I am shaken as the dust
from his mantle. He is ashamed of me before
this Cæsar. And the Greek . . . I will creep into
the library. I will steal his manuscripts ; I will
pilfer . . . That one he hugged ; I will keep the
fragments in my bosom. He is ashamed of me.

[*Mechanically he breaks his bow over his*

*knee as he snarls imprecations. DORIS
darts from an obscure corner.*

DORIS. Do not chide me, do not be angry ; I have waited in the darkness ; have waited to spring on you as a pard. You are mine. Embrace me !

ANTIPATER. A queen, you can embrace me anywhere—before Cæsar. You must not creep in, fugitive.

DORIS. What has befallen you, my son ? Your voice ! Has a wolf looked at you and made it hoarse ?

[Taking him by his shoulder boldly and giving him a shake.]

But you shall not speak like that to me, as though you were not my son. A husband can say to a woman, ‘ You are not my wife,’ he can deny her ; but a son can never say to his mother, ‘ You are not my mother.’ Always a man must cherish his mother. His tent is her tent : till death they are together.

ANTIPATER. We are not in the desert now ; we are in the court of a great King.

DORIS. A great King’s court, where there are plots. I have discovered a plot.

ANTIPATER. Then discover it to my father : you are his Queen.

DORIS. It is not a plot that concerns the King’s life.

ANTIPATER. Whose life ?

DORIS. It is a plot of the Princes Alexander and Aristobulus. They are most discontented.

ANTIPATER. They are naught! Do not vex me with shadows. They are ghosts, as Queen Mariamne is a ghost. Doris, my little mother of the tents, you are a queen; you are wearing the ornaments of the dead. Of old we talked of nothing but this King . . . in the long nights, on the days when the sand did not move. Kiss me, for your lover is my lover. There is no one in the world like this King.

DORIS. Yes, indeed, Antipater, except you. You are more to me than the King. The King does not love me any more; he hates the movements I make, he watches my shadow . . . These ornaments are too heavy for me. I am not a Queen. But you shall be a King, my Antipater, and your brethren shall wait on you, as Joseph's brethren did obeisance to him in a dream.

ANTIPATER. Ha!

DORIS. I am all ear for you, my Prince, in my anxiety . . . and the faithful Bathylus. . . .

ANTIPATER. Well? But I would rather you did not consort with slaves.

DORIS. It is a letter from Prince Alexander's wife. Bathylus has picked it up . . . The Princess Glaphyra wrote it to the King of Cappadocia, her father. So Bathylus has told me . . . (*Watching ANTIPATER as he reads.*) He says that the Princes are discontented and are making complaint. (*ANTIPATER whistles as he puts the letter in his bosom.*) Antipater, Bathylus says the

Princes hate you with bitter hatred. Is there anything of this hate in the letter?

ANTIPATER. It is a long letter. The Princes are children.

DORIS. Antipater, you must not despise the Princes.

Herod is fond of them as of young roses; they are to him as the roses of Mariamne's garden.

Antipater, see! the King is coming back and Alexander is with him. (*She touches ANTIPATER on the chest.*) But you have the letter. It shall be as an arrow. Shoot it!

[*She disappears through a near arch.*]

HEROD (*to ALEXANDER*). Then that shall be the order of the feast

To-morrow! Cæsar dull!

We have hunted overmuch and wearied him.

ALEXANDER. Cæsar is used to the arena, father.

HEROD. My little amphitheatre . . . here and there
Clogged with disuse—furnish it, you know how,
Being half a Roman.

Well, Antipater,

You have wearied Cæsar with wild game—your
drove

Round Etham of a hundred ibexes.

He cavils at my hospitality,

That proudly as a mirror held the pleasure

Of Cleopatra mirrored . . . She departed . . .

And shall the mirror now distort the glory

Of Cæsar? Why, Mark Antony returned me

Continual wonder at my entertainment.

Mark Antony, who lived upon great cities,
Drawing their luxury to flower ; and Greeks,
King Archelaus among them, made me equal
With high Olympians in my pomp of feasts.

[*Impatiently stamping before* ANTIPATER.]

You have abashed me . . . Ignorant, untrained,
You must consult your brother, what he rules
Being as an instant order.

(*To* ALEXANDER.) Star of fashion,
If I were perfect in imperial modes,
As when our Cæsar young, and Antony
Held banquets for me, I myself should stablsh
The feasts, the entertainments of the hour.
To-day the ritual failed. I am abashed.

ALEXANDER (*to* ANTIPATER). Fillets of boar and sea-
fish following—

Rome ! what could Cæsar think ?
Your oysters should be shipped alive from Pyrrha :
They lay stale on the tongue.

HEROD. Enough !

Be steward and dispenser of my welcome
To Cæsar, my young Roman !

(*To* ANTIPATER.) Well ?

ANTIPATER. If the dessert were mean, we were
awaiting

From Syria figs and dates from Jericho.

ALEXANDER. Cæsar will taste no dates from Jericho ;
The yards of Egypt fill his chalices.
But, father, in my garden
I have a vine of grapes like those in cluster

That hang upon the doors of God, gold, fragrant
As cassia by the beehives. I will cut them
With my own hands, an offering to Cæsar.

[He runs out.]

HEROD. How glorious !

To pleasure me—the speed !

ANTIPATER.

A glorious flight—

A slippery ostrich, truly a swift bird,

And very capable in flight—and all

To pleasure Cæsar.

HEROD (*still looking after ALEXANDER*). My young
Romans—not

As you, Antipater, malign and wary,

My panther, not as you. They are young Princes

At any court, and where they are is Rome.

I feared they would despise me ; I am wrong.

They are a little shy, a little jealous,

A little haughty.

(*Putting his finger on ANTIPATER'S mouth.*) Soft !

Do not accuse them ! . . . They will hint a fear

Cæsar will laugh at certain entertainments

Esteemed a decade back . . . slip in new forms ;

And set aside, but not

With jeering comment, what fastidious Time

Has set aside. It is their pride in me.

[HEROD turns sharply, disconcerted by

ANTIPATER'S sudden laughter.]

ANTIPATER (*holding out one of his father's long plats*).

Forgive the action ! Alexander thus

Held forth a trapping of his brother's hair,

And laughed, ' Our father's hair is deeper black,
Is dyed so sumptuously that it shines
A substance in itself, not variant
As our young hair.' Is this their pride in you ?

HEROD. It is their pride.

They would that I should dye my hair more
featly . . .

Doris' white hair disgusts me—leprosy,
White hair—the plague !

ANTIPATER (*laughing again*). And they complain a
little they must bend

To walk beside you, so from age you stoop.

HEROD. You may in this take pattern of your
brothers.

ANTIPATER. I was built of you a column, not a reed . . .

Forgive it, father—thus you fashioned me.

HEROD. Antipater, I fear

I set you up too high in privilege.

Mark this : I have not drawn you from the desert
To be a spy upon our royalties.

I fear I have done ill so to remember

Earlier, before my greatness, in my youth,

I had a son . . .

I drew you from my own obscurity :

It is immense ! The years I had condemned,
My years, low-breathing to me with the breath
Of sighing prisoners underneath the ground,
Were yet my years of youth : Doris was there ;
And there, strange as the future to me, full
Of promise as the future, was my son.

Doris I guard for her fidelity—
Though but a winter-bough beside my throne,
Nor shadow, nor delight, Why are you here,
Save as a well of water from the desert,
That I may drink in secret from its source?
What are you? By your brothers you are nothing.

[ANTIPATER watches his father with twitching eyes; he keeps his mouth covered with his cloak.

ANTIPATER (*in the folds of his cloak*). I will not speak of them . . .

[*He moves away; but returns, dropping the cloak from his mouth.*

Father, I dare not
Leave you so unprepared, before a purpose
That will defeat you, as your heart laid open
Before an enemy . . . and yet this letter—
A letter from the Princess Glaphyra,
Writ to the king her father, Archelaus,
As any letter full of cries for home,
And messages . . . and one from Alexander . . .
To your fond eyes and from a wife, though aimed
Against your peace, may not disturb your peace.

[HEROD would snatch the letter.

Not yet . . . not thus! So unprepared . . .
(*Struggling.*) I will not, for I know your love is fixed

On these fair Romans . . . No!

HEROD. What is it they have writ of me? Such things

We write of one another in the frenzy
And record of the soul ! We write such words
Of accusation when we love.

I know
That they would never plot against my life . . .
They would not ? . . . Torture !
The torture that will never be suspended,
That has no limit to its term, my torture,
The question as I put it to myself—
Could they so hate me ?

ANTIPATER.

No !

It is not that : but as you make demand,
And tax for revenue the secret treasure,
And to its limit-riches, of the realm
Your heart is lord of—in your sight the wrong
Your sons have done is such a wrong to nature,
It is so opposite to all your prayers,
It answers to your fondness as a stone
Thrust in the hungry hand, stretched forth for
food . . .

A purpose—oh, but inconceivable !
A purpose in relation to such fondness
As you have lavished on my brothers . . . Father,
You dote on them, you follow as a dog,
Pine in their absence as a dog, make ring
The palace with your cries if at a meal
They fail or from reluctance shun the chase.
You do all this, and . . .

HEROD (*turning angrily on him*). Well, Antipater,
What do *they* do ?

ANTIPATER (*looking straight up as if in prayer*).

They purpose flight to Pontus ;

They ask for refuge from you at the court

Of Archelaus . . . Inconceivable ! . . .

From you, their father, from the great King

Herod,

Loving them in his heart and with his pride.

[*Drawing nearer anxiously and laying
the letter on HEROD'S knee.*

Father . . . they ask but refuge . . .

They say you have no pity on their youth,

Speak to me, father !

HEROD (*standing erect on the steps of his throne*).

Bid them all come in !

Cæsar . . . bid Cæsar come ! . . .

And Alexander . . . Have you heard my bidding ?

ANTIPATER. Aristobulus ?

HEROD. All, by any names . . .

They have no names. Drag me the treason in !

[*Exit ANTIPATER.*

[*HEROD descends from the throne and
paces to and fro : then pauses in front
of it, looking up.*

. . . They have fled from me, my throne ! You
are set up

As a great marble seat among the sands,

Idle and floated over by the dust.

. . . This flight ! It is more deadly than re-
bellion.

Had they caught me in a gin and led me bound

To the court of Archelaus—a wild beast,
We should have breathed hot on each other's faces,
We should have injured one another : now
They flee me and they are not injured. God
Is injured in this thing that they would do,
That would efface me. Or I am a father
Bent over them, even as God bent over
His creatures in creation, or I breathe
With no significance, without avail.

*[Laughter is heard : ALEXANDER and
ARISTOBULUS run in, each carrying a
bunch of grapes tied to an olive-branch.
They pause as if they encountered
their father's mood. He speaks very
low.]*

Not parricide, but more unnatural,
This fleeing from me . . . Honey of the rock
The wild bees know and murmur of, and feed
Deliciously about it : from the substance
That is their life they do not make escape,
Pulled downward to the virtue, nor of instinct
Deny it . . . Blank before your sin,
I see myself a king set up, and then
Of death set down and not a king for ever.
This crown—even Mariamne
Lifted her noble eyes on it ! Her children
Flee for adoption to a bastard kingdom,
And would be almsmen to a foreigner.

ARISTOBULUS *(throwing down his grape-hung wand
and clinging to HEROD)*. Father, we love you !

If you loved us back—

We fled from your unkindness.

HEROD (*to ALEXANDER*). Very haughty

You, with your tribute, and unmoved. For
Cæsar

This offering of your first-fruits.

[ALEXANDER *is silent.*

Stubbornness !

[ALEXANDER *purses his lips up to the
grape-cluster above his head and bites off
a grape.*

But thus your mother stood upon her trial,

Her eyes above her judges, and, it seems,

They said, I gave the whisper she must die.

ARISTOBULUS. No, no, we love you . . . No !

Do not so thwart us from you. It was terror.

HEROD (*to ALEXANDER*). And you ?

ALEXANDER. Father, there is a condition to my
love :

You are abused to dream I do not love you,

As you were deep abused, doubting my mother.

HEROD. But you have done this thing—you wrote
these words.

ALEXANDER. Where was my place ? When you had
slain my mother

You slew her place—ah, then you truly slew her—

For you had kept her honoured on her throne

Long as that throne was vacant : in white robes

I saw her, and the movement of her robes.

I cannot see her any more : her absence

Is violated by an effigy—

You have the stranger wife, the stranger son. . . .

HEROD. You love me . . . stay !

And Mariamne loved me ? But these words

Are as great victories in lands so far

The distance makes a glory in itself.

You never gave me sign

Of any love you bore. If this were truth !

ALEXANDER. Truth. But there is condition in my
love . . .

Banish Antipater, that I may love you,

For I am jealous, father.

HEROD (*suddenly folding his right arm round ALEX-
ANDER*). Are you jealous ?

Are you indeed come back to me from Rome ?

Jealous and angry for me—you, her children ?

You are indeed come back to me from Rome !

[He draws them both into his arms.]

Conceive ! . . . If you should fail

This my infinity of love and shrink

From this confusion of you with my being . . .

[Binding them closer.]

For you had fled from me to Archelaus,

You would have kissed the lips of strangers,
breathed

Air that I did not breathe . . . Your feet were
turned,

Pointed away from me, as feet of corpses . . .

There, do not trouble . . . There, you must not
weep !

If it should be my doom ! Conceive !

*[His voice dies away, as he loses his sons
from his clasp.*

(In a whisper.) They cannot !

*[As CÆSAR, with ANTIPATER, enters,
HEROD moves forward, trailing the
Princes along with him in each arm.*

I called you, Cæsar,

To be our judge and to decide among us—

And yet I fear you cannot. By a tempest

Being suddenly subdued, the elements

So writhe in me I can but call on you

To listen to the moaning of a wind.

Will you not call this madness ?

CÆSAR.

The offence ?

What have these children done ?

HEROD.

Nothing—indeed,

A thing too small for punishment ; and yet

Revolted soldiers shrinking from their legion

Need not so blench.

CÆSAR.

Accuse them—

For either they will clear themselves, or clear

Their bosoms of their guilt.

[The night falls.

HEROD.

If I accused them,

How should you take account ? You have not
brooded

Over a word through solitudes as long

As Time itself. You draw to a tribunal

Defects and flaws so delicate, their nature

Is perished ere they reach the Judgment Seat.
How shall I speak it? I had waked alone
To-morrow, I had sought them as my love
Led me to seek them furtively in sleep,
Or in their morning laughter: and the slaves
Had stretched the carpets to my face and
feigned

They knew not of this flight from my unkindness.
My palace had been sorrowful, as if
Death had been planted there, and presently
The happy news had come that they were
safe

From me, in refuge from me ! They desired
To live with Archelaus.

CÆSAR. Then banish them
A little while to Archelaus' court.
They will repent.

HEROD (*covering the Princes with his eyes*). O Cæsar,
One does not banish children. I am old :
I love but roses . . . I am growing old.

ALEXANDER. Banish Antipater !

CÆSAR. It is well spoken.
Banish him, Herod.

[A cry like a fierce wild animal's is heard.

HEROD. How has he offended ?
Where is his lack of love ? And his ambition
Is to be ever at my side. So quickly
Can I forget ?

CÆSAR. Among our idols, Herod,
One must be master-idol. Break your heart,

If it must be in twain ; let not twain break it !

[There is a deep silence. HEROD looks round ; an obscurity of the suddenly-fallen darkness is on all the faces.]

HEROD. Why is this silence ? Is it that the night
Is coming on, when all contention yields ?
Armies lie down, with hatred in their breasts,
Almost together for the sake of sleep.
So must my sons lie down . . . And for the sake
Of the great power that would renew them kindly,
And all their gifts invigorate.

*[Silently the Princes steal away and
ANTIPATER crouches on the ground.]*

This council

Is broken up ! *[He waves his hand.]*

I cannot see their faces . . . It is faded.

I cannot see them . . . and they are not banished.

*[He makes a groping movement and is
approaching ANTIPATER, when CÆSAR
arrests him and leads him back down
the hall. Their tread is heard, and the
sharp breath of ANTIPATER.]*

ACT III

SCENE

A half-dark lower room in the Palace, filled with dim, antique treasure. A door at the back ; far down to the right another ; and in the wall to the left a narrow door and a high, grated window.

ALEXANDER, ARISTOBULUS, CORINTHUS

ALEXANDER. But you must examine this treasure.

CORINTHUS. I have no mind to examine it. It comes from the sepulchre of a dead King.

ALEXANDER. It comes from the sepulchre of David. My father has visited the sepulchre.

CORINTHUS. He has rifled the sepulchre.

[ALEXANDER and ARISTOBULUS walk among the sunken objects, as if they were kicking dead leaves.]

ALEXANDER. Confusion ! And what strange images decay has set upon these heaps . . . this glitter among the dust and this breaking to pieces at a touch !

CORINTHUS. It is horrible.

ALEXANDER. Fie, Corinthus, you are old before your time. It is not horrible to secure these jewels from the dust.

CORINTHUS. Would you be buried with them?

ALEXANDER. I shall be buried royally. I have no fear for my funeral. Heigh! But we have here a magnificent canopy. Come, Corinthus, help us to set it up. You will not? Aristobulus!

[The youths set up the half-broken canopy.]

It is royal! Have you not observed my father has been much more intimate with us of late? *(Patting ARISTOBULUS' head.)* Younger! Twin monarchs in a little while. And all this golden furniture our own.

[He opens the lid of a coffer.]

CORINTHUS. It is very gloomy here and desperate. Can you not wait till the slaves have received orders concerning the distribution of the furniture? Must you come here, like spies, picking over the jewels? Do not touch them. Come away.

ALEXANDER. No, let us pick, pick, and rifle . . . Kings, you know, rifle the sepulchres of Kings. It is a royal custom. Belts and jewelled swords! See, Corinthus, a present after your first campaign. But this! . . . *(he takes up a crown)* the sockets for the jewels in this diadem are empty.

ARISTOBULUS. Yes, they are empty.

CORINTHUS. They are staring like empty eyeballs of the dead.

ALEXANDER. That is how it looks to you, pale Corinthus. I am in favour with my father now, and I shall present him with this unfurnished coronet for repair. Amethysts . . . and again emeralds.

[He turns the crown about with his fingers.]

CORINTHUS. Where is Antipater?

ALEXANDER. Banish Antipater!

CORINTHUS. Antipater does not steal down into these chambers to handle the gems in the King's treasuries.

ARISTOBULUS (*lifting an old sceptre*). Do not concern yourself with Antipater. I no longer concern myself with him. We have the secret . . . flattery! We can flatter our father to his bent. He believes, he actually credits, that we are only happy in his presence. We repeat that he is our darling, that we only value existence for his sake. He credits us.

ALEXANDER (*crossing the room restlessly*). I shall never flatter my father. It is natural he should love us. Fathers do set their hearts on their children.

[ALEXANDER, who has been playing with the crown, sets it on his head.]

CORINTHUS. The King!

[Enter HEROD at the back; he comes along, straining as if with a burthen, though he carries nothing. His head

*is bare ; and his long, black hair wild
in disordered plaits. He stops before
the canopy.*

HEROD. Spectres !

*[He passes on, turns back as if to assure
himself he had seen true. The sceptre
drops from ARISTOBULUS' hand.
HEROD rushes out. Those who have
followed him pass out after him.]*

CORINTHUS. Why did I consent to come to this
place ? Should my father find me here he would
rank me impious.

ALEXANDER *(dashing the crown from his head)*.
Impious, but we are impious. I fear we are
ghostly children to our father. He took us for
spectres.

ARISTOBULUS. We are doomed.

ALEXANDER. He is doomed, the King, our father,
Cæsar's friend. His face ! And he thought we
were spectres. We are to him as ghostly children.
We have broken from him, ; we have fled from him.
(Stopping suddenly in horror.) We have been to
him, he said, as young roses, as the smell of the
roses of Mariamne's garden. He has said to us
again and again that we were as the balsam of the
balsam-trees, that we wafted spice to him as from
the lost balm-yards of Jericho. He has said we
were to him as Rome, as the days of his lusty-
hood with Mark Antony.

ARISTOBULUS. But his hatred . . . Alexander, it struck the sceptre from my hand.

ALEXANDER. No, no—he does not hate us. He turned back with that face, I remember, when we were children, and our mother dead, we implored he would send us to Rome. So great a King and we have dishonoured him.

CORINTHUS. If he were reasonable like my father——

ALEXANDER (*staring with contempt at CORINTHUS*).

He gives alms to the world of his unreason.

He is immense, and has the movements of a god.

Cæsar is astonished at him, and trembles at his

tenderness. The whole world is astonished.

ARISTOBULUS. You speak so? He murdered our mother.

ALEXANDER. Peace, peace! He did not murder her. . . . peace, peace!

CORINTHUS. Then you judge she deserved her death, that she did mingle the poison-bowl?

ALEXANDER (*striking CORINTHUS*). My mother, Queen Mariamne! But there is not in our blood anything that could injure him. He overwhelms us—he is too terrible . . . My mother! Did she once plead for her life that you should think that the King murdered her?

Enter TERO from the back

O Tero—speak! For I fear my father is gone mad. I fear we have undone him. He spread on before his retinue like a wild, limping bird. He

was alone . . . without ceremonial. Have you missed him? Is there truth in this apparition?

TERO. Come away from these accursed things!

I came from a tomb, and I beheld you, young creatures, as in a tomb. Away with you! Go!

ARISTOBULUS. We cannot go up to the Palace—the King clanged the door behind him. We cannot move. It is forbidden.

ALEXANDER (*going up to TERO*). What has befallen my father?

TERO. It is almost forbidden to speak what has befallen him . . . There was stench from the tomb and dishonour. I heard groaning, and then a great whistling noise like a curse. He issued with a cry of 'Rebellious children—Absalom, Adonijah—children that were a-hungred for his throne, children that would have put him to the sword.' . . . And you were here, playing with these baubles. He passed you in his frenzy—you are lost!

[The door into the treasury is thrown open and filled with the spear-points of soldiers. There are soldiers also at the outer door.]

ARISTOBULUS. I knew we were doomed. We are in this tomb for ever.

ALEXANDER. Tero, let me see my father; entreat him to speak with me. Pass these soldiers.

[TERO advances.]

TERO. Why are you here? Give place! I would speak with the King.

THE CENTURION (*advancing*). You shall speak with the King and of what nearly concerns him. Follow me . . . Let your son come too !

[*He advances toward the little door in the left wall.*]

ARISTOBULUS. Do not leave us, Corinthus.

CORINTHUS. My father is arrested and my place is at my father's side. My place is with him.

TERO. Is the King there? I would speak with him.

CENTURION. He will question you, Lord Tero. He is within.

[*The little door shuts behind them.*]

ARISTOBULUS (*creeping up to ALEXANDER*). It is the door

Of the torture-chamber. . . .

ALEXANDER. Yes.

The other door barred and with Gaulish spears.

(*With a low laugh.*) Scylla—Charybdis. . . .

ARISTOBULUS. We shall hear ?

ALEXANDER. Tero is constant in his faithfulness, Dear, noble Tero. . . .

ARISTOBULUS. He will save us. Listen !

A throng of voices . . . I must see !

[*He draws a golden stool to the wall and stands on it that he may look through the grating ; but the old seat collapses into dust and he falls.*]

ALEXANDER (*raising him*). No, no ! Not spies !
No, it will come to us

Over the air through stone . . .

Hush ! A low rumble like a hornet's nest . . .

I can hear nothing but the anger—nothing ! . . .

Tero's reply, lost in his beard !

A VOICE (*below the grating.*) My father,

True, they would wear your sceptre and your
crown.

Oh, you beheld the truth,

And what you have yourself beheld, uncensured,
I may affirm.

ARISTOBULUS. Antipater !

ALEXANDER. The asp !

ANTIPATER (*within*). And I affirm they hate you
from the blood

That bred them ; of their mother's life they hate
you ;

And by her death they hate you deadlier still.

ARISTOBULUS (*shuddering*). A groan !

ALEXANDER. Not Tero . . . Hush !

ANTIPATER (*within*). And I affirm they hate you in
the surfeit

And steadiness of youth : to glut elation

Of their cold arrogance, they crave your life,

Your sceptre plundered from their mother's race.

[*A deep groan.*]

You fed them with your heart's

Red blood-drops, with your wounds, as in the
desert

The pelican, vulning itself for offspring,

Bleeds in its piety . . . and they !

My father, but to speak their thanklessness,
Should turn the tongue into a cruel stone.

They crave your death and they would murder
you. [A cry.]

ALEXANDER. He must believe it, having seen us.

ARISTOBULUS. Tero

Will save us—Tero,

You know, will save us—Tero . . .

Why are you silent ?

ANTIPATER (*within*). Proof !—

You ask ? A picture still before your gaze ?

Did you not see the sceptre of King David,

The crown wherewith he crowned King Solomon

Held in possession of their hands ? The sceptre

Of David and the crown wherewith he crowned

King Solomon, his son ?

Kings of Judæa, virtual as the line

Of Asmonæans, with whose blood your sons,

Being fruit of Mariamne, are composed.

Kings they would be by right and not through

Cæsar :

Nor is there accusation of their love

That is not of hot truth. They seek your life

By implications so implacable

They are as murder ; and abhor your presence,

That is to me unweariably sweet ;

They jest at your great majesty. My father,

For them you need no proof . . . perchance for
me,

Unhappy, torn from the wide desert-plains,

Set 'mid the jar of royalties, for me
You need, alas, a surety . . . who might seem
A serpent to destroy the pelican's
Heart-cherished brood . . . This man,
This Tero, private to your children's hours,
Told me, when in a crevice of the hills . . .
You found us there . . . that with great bitter-
ness

The Princes had besought from his tried bow,
Amid the negligence of hunting-hustle,
An arrow fatal to your life, my lord.

[*Turning to TERO.*

Is it not true that when we were hunting together, yesterday at noon, you confessed that the Prince Alexander had urged you to cast a dart at his father, as if by chance, to murder him ?

HEROD'S VOICE. O David ! Rebellious children, desiring my blood. Absalom, Adonijah ! The curse from thy tomb . . . O David !

ALEXANDER. I cannot hear Tero's reply. . . .

ANTIPATER (*within*). You hear he confesses he spoke with me at noon yesterday ; but he says it was on far other matter—that I should withhold you from visiting King David's tomb. He makes me a liar. We will have the truth.

HEROD'S VOICE. Bind him !

[*A pause and scuffle of feet.* ALEXANDER
hushes ARISTOBULUS.

(*A VOICE rings out.*) The Princes are innocent.

ANTIPATER (*within*). And now, and now ?

A VOICE. Innocent . . . Ye Gods . . . innocent !

Slay not the innocent blood . . .

ARISTOBULUS. Tero will save us . . . will he not save us ? Why are you silent ?

ALEXANDER. Through this man's courage we are saved.

A VOICE (*in a faint scream*). Innocent !

[*There are cries and sobs, then a terrible shriek.*]

A VOICE (*high and wild*). I cannot bear it any longer . . . I will confess all . . . I have heard the Princes wish you were dead ; for the sake of their dead mother they have wished it again and again, hating converse with her murderer and that they should live with him. . . . Again and again they have yearned to appease the ghosts of the dead. Again and again they have coveted your crown ; again and again they have told me your wives should be shut in tomb-prisons, alive and despoiled . . . They would bury you as a slave . . . they deride you as an old man ; they laugh when they have yielded to you in the hunt some creature they could themselves have killed long before you perceived it. They laugh at your Roman fashion of long ago. They reproach your justice as wild and polluted ; they swear they will accuse you to Cæsar.

ALEXANDER (*to ARISTOBULUS, who falls by his side*). These are moments of our lives . . . these are words of our lips . . . We must die.

HEROD'S VOICE (*within*). Unbar the door . . .
Give me my liberty.

He enters, his Guard behind

By youth you are condemned, not by old age ;
By this Corinthus, by this boy, who could not
Suffer his father's straining cries . . .

(*Panting.*) who snapt

The living bond of fellows and the fancies
That bind the young with threads of gossamer.
How should they hold ? [*Advancing nearer.*

He is traitor to you, children ;
He has unpacked your wild, exasperate thoughts,
Your curses, your contractions, all you muttered
Against me as I turned to mount my horse.

I often speculated—now I know—

What of conspiracy behind your teeth
Was hissing at me ; for he poured forth all,
As Tero waxed and shrivelled in his pain.

He could not see his father at such strife ;
And to the torturers, who stayed their hands
To bide his chanting, sung us all your story.
False from the first—false each of you, and
then

Confederate in your falsity. Sometimes
Laughing in note of my infirmities,
Sometimes forecasting the felicity,
With smile and golden candour, of my death ;
And in my softer moments, when I clung
And fondled on your beauty, sometimes feigning.

But Mariamne did not this, she feigned not ;
She never feigned to love . . . O eloquent !
He could not bide his father's pain ! And
you—

This my exposure were an entertainment,
And a diversion to you ; it were matter
For many foolish jests, save for this power
Within the substance of my flesh to doom.
You tremble . . . it is well . . . for now my
trembling
Is not a hollow beating to itself.
Aristobulus, you are pale.

My sons,
You shall be put far from me at Sebaste—
Some day you shall be strangled there : that
day
Live you expectant of . . . not of my death,
Your death.

I shall not fix the day of doom.
Agenor has the death-ring safe. And while
You wait in torment and suspense, my torment
Shall ghost beside you. [*Coming still nearer.*

Have no fear—your tombs
Shall be most royal ; you are sons of Kings.

[*Madly he weeps, stretching out his hands
toward them.*

ALEXANDER. Hear me !

HEROD (*turning his head back and closing his eyes*).

I will not break your beauty up
By torture, and I will not hear your cries.

Be still ! Laid by your mother's side for ever,
One on each side, at Alexandrium . . .
How often have I seen this in the night !
Be still ! It is a vision . . . It prevails.

[He makes a movement of blessing over them, and is drawn back fainting into the Torture-Chamber. The young men for a while remain speechless. Then ARISTOBULUS sobs, while ALEXANDER stands, with his eyes fixed on the closed door.]

ARISTOBULUS.

Corinthus !

My age within a day, our follies grown
As on a single stem . . . he took the babble,
The fleeting malice of our tongues to kill us.
O miserable !

ARISTOBULUS. We must forgive Corinthus.

Would I could serve my father in his sort !

[The Guard enters by the inner door of the Treasure-Room, led by ANTIPATER. He mutters a few words, among them 'Sebaste,' to the Guard, then props himself against the wall, white as a spectre. At the sight of the Guard and its leader both Princes hold themselves indomitably firm ; they are bound in silence and are led away, following each other, through the outer door.]

ANTIPATER. I wonder—is his voice still in the vault?

I heard it from behind as a sea's roar

Before me in a cavern . . . Terrible !
I have not trapped him to the heart—my sentence
‘ Go from me, leave me, see them bound.’ My sentence,
My condemnation ! And these miscreant children,
Doomed to Sebaste, he was blessing them ;
His heavy, heaving breath
Was laden with their names—‘ Aristobulus,
. . . Her children . . . Alexander . . . Mari-
amne.’

While I, who am himself,
And of himself and like himself, a shadow
In the dark water of his very substance,
I am dismissed to bind them for Sebaste.
Shall I escape ? No—he shall not escape !
An Arab, he has knit his kingdoms up
Into a kingdom, and I am himself,
And I am famished as he famishes,
Am lonesome of his lonesomeness—my father ! . . .
The hate, the broken blood about my brain !

[The door above is opened ; HEROD gropes down with a lantern, though the light is still blue daylight in the doorway through which the Princes have passed.]

HEROD. Why are you here, Antipater ? Where are your brothers ?

ANTIPATER. You have doomed my brothers to death ; they are passing out by yonder door.

HEROD. Ay, banished—it was the will of Cæsar.

[He passes his hand over his eyes and laughs with closed mouth. ANTIPATER shudders.]

What are you doing here, Antipater?

ANTIPATER (*shrilly*). I am picking up the echoes in the Hall of Judgment . . . I am ready to follow my brothers. Father, an outcast!

[HEROD looks for a long time at the wide-open door; then he takes up some jewels, running his fingers through them.]

HEROD. Do you prize these things?

ANTIPATER. Not these!

[He raises his eyes and fixes them on his father.]

I desire to be with you, to be your only one.

HEROD. You desire my crown . . .

O Antipater!

[He, in his turn, shudders; then climbs heavily, but with speed, up the steps. ANTIPATER rolls on the ground, biting the dust.]

ACT IV

SCENE

Beside the fountain Callirrhoë, in the desert by Jericho.

A black Arab tent, the skirts drawn aside, discovering a throne and cushions in a half-circle. On the left of the tent, the fountain fills a basin in the rock ; on the other side, stretches a desert-horizon, barred by a ruinous, little turret. In front of the tent a brazier is alight. HEROD bows over the fountain.

HEROD. It is my new toy, this fountain of Callirrhoë, and it gives me power to be alone . . . For they will leave the old man by the springs for his healing. Doris does not plague me. They think I am comforted of the murmur . . . This fountain is my new god. It laments for ever : its woe never stanches. I should like that my God should have a never-stanching woe, I should like to comfort my God ! I should like to listen to the story of His wrongs. If indeed He were a Father ! If He knew how the heart clogs ! . . . There is such loving in me ! I should like to be as Abishag

to David: I should like to be as a maiden to warm the heart of some old god. There is such loving in me! I figure to myself this fountain as soothed that I remain at its brink . . . I will be faithful.

[DORIS comes from within the folds of the tent and stands by the brazier.]

There is Doris! She is shivering, and she looks over the sands. Doris, little wife, what are you straining for?

DORIS. Herod, the wind blows too hard by the fountain. You should return to your tent.

HEROD. Yes, presently.

[He tries to catch her hand.]

DORIS (*throwing back his caress*). Do not heed me—I am old.

[She goes back into the tent.]

HEROD. 'I am old—do not heed me.' She says we should not heed the old. Well, we are all white-headed; we must all begin to live to ourselves. Snowy councillors! Nothing but snow round me! Doris, snow-white! Balbus and Nicholaus, snow-white too; all my councillors, snow-white. The old are so silent to one another. It is snow, snow!

[A troop of children runs round the tent and dances round the brazier. Then the troop runs off.]

(*Calling.*) Children! . . . They do not heed; and an indulgence in me lets them alone. They will

come presently and let me down into their world and transform me. I shall become like a goldfish among a darting group of goldfish in the pond. They have no interest in anything I have done, and yet I have never displeased them.

[*Little HEROD AGRIPPA returns from among the children and stands square before the King.*]

HEROD AGRIPPA. Grandfather, you have built the Temple at Jerusalem—what shall I build to God? Shall I build another Temple?

HEROD (*drawing the boy to him*). You shall protect the Temple I built; you shall keep it safe as King David kept his flock—safe from the bear. You are stronger than the lion or the bear. You shall protect the lovely House.

HEROD AGRIPPA. Will that please God?

HEROD. It will please God.

HEROD AGRIPPA. I shall be made High Priest, and enter the Holy Place when I am King.

HEROD (*groaning*). No, no! You can never be High Priest: it is forbidden to the Race of Edom.

HEROD AGRIPPA. Grandfather, I shall be made High Priest, and I shall set up the Golden Eagle the young men have plucked down from the roof of the Temple. Do not groan any more. I shall set up Cæsar's Golden Eagle to protect the Temple.

HEROD. God would have none of my images. You must not set up the Roman Eagle: it is accursed.

HEROD AGRIPPA. But Cæsar, grandfather, is always the friend of God.

HEROD. You must not be dreaming of Cæsar. God holds I have desecrated His Temple with the Golden Eagle ; He has cast it down ; He has cursed it ; and I have fled to the desert. You must love the Temple, you must be ready to lay down your life for the Temple—but remember, child, God will have no images . . .

[The boy fidgets and slips off.]

Just as one could pour into youth some wisdom, some power for its seasoning, youth escapes.

[HEROD AGRIPPA'S laugh is heard behind the tent.]

I perceive there can be no exchange of gifts between the young and the old. How I abhor these children ! We shall play no more together, for I have confessed to them I have offended God. O my God, how I love Him and have offended ! . . . They are all dead that trampled my Golden Eagle, for if my people deny me the care of God's House, then shall my people perish ! . . . I have come to the desert to die, and I have none to die with. One should keep one's children for this hour. When we die we are in the desert and we need that one should give us drink . . . some passing caravan . . . some relief ! Antipater ! Antipater ! Now I have grasped his name, I am saved as if from drowning ! There is rumour he has left Rome, and, uncommanded,

returns to Judæa. He is on his way . . . I will send messengers to speed him . . . Now I am sick I must remember my first-born. Easy to my faults, overcome by my excess of power—Antipater! Ah! shall I draw to me those eyes that glittered, fastening to the sapphire on my brow? Those void eyes that stared at me for the crown-jewels, as if I were dead? It shall be a test to tell him I am eaten of the worms. Will he be my nurse—Antipater?

[DORIS *has been standing behind him.*
He turns and sees her.

O Doris, you quicken at the name. We are old . . . It is lonesome . . . See, there is a little fire; they have lighted a fire.

[*He crouches down by her under the brazier.*

It is long since your Antipater went away to Rome. Let us speak of him. (*Spreading his hands out in the flame.*) Let us speak of him and his return.

DORIS. You have forbidden me to speak of him.

HEROD. No, no! I have forbidden you to speak of the dead. (*He surveys the fire.*) It is very lonesome, and in the flames there is nothing of the future. We sit by the flames and they glow . . . and they speak to us of their young days . . . of all they have wrought, the cities they have destroyed, the sacrifices they have consummated; how they have played with the tombs, how they have had their pleasure with the dead. (*Rising.*)

Not with my dead ! No, my dead are not buried Roman ! They are very fair. No, no ! they are not murdered of the flames.

DORIS. Herod, you have a living son ; do not speak of the dead.

HEROD. I would be patient with you, Doris. You have been very faithful. You have waited my pleasure and I have sufficed you. Doris, it is hard on you I am so sick ; it is like slow dying to you . . . For you would not care, would you, to live any more when I am dead ? Doris, why are you stammering ?

DORIS. My lord will not die.

HEROD. Yes, little Arab, little Arab Queen ; I am dying before your eyes. You have watched me and you have not wept.

DORIS (*at his feet, caressing him*). Let him come back to the fountain : let him drink the waters of healing. My lord is my life ; he is the light of my days.

[HEROD *suffers himself to be led back to the fountain.*

HEROD. Will you give me to drink, Doris ?

[*But DORIS is standing petrified before SALOME, who comes suddenly from behind the tent, with a phial and parchment in her hand.*

SALOME. Hold, hold ! Herod, you must not take anything from her hand. There is conspiracy. You must trust no one about you.

HEROD. O Salome, this is an old word—conspiracy !
You have arrested me from drinking many a
draught that would have healed me. I will not
be arrested by your lies—so familiar the voice of
this temptation, bidding me believe Mariamne
unfaithful, and my slaves unfaithful, and my
children unfaithful. Leave me alone ! I will
drink.

SALOME. Then my business shall be with the Queen.
I am the bearer of a letter to her from her son.
And I must read it to her alone, for she cannot
read.

[HEROD. rises to grasp the letter ; the cup
rolls into the fountain.]

HEROD. Do not shiver, Doris ! You are faithful.
There is some miscarriage, and whatever the
children have done you are faithful.

[He takes her hands.]

Doris, these hands were warming at a brazier ;
Why have they sunk so cold ?

Patience, Salome !

There are some words the agèd must not hear.
They must not hear of children that are false ;
Nor must they be accused, not in their age.
Patience !

SALOME. No patience—for they are in league—
My Arab lover and your Arab son ;
And Sileus has himself . . .

HEROD. Ah, Sileus, is it ?
All plotting and mirage ! Do not be childish ;

We must not be so childish any more.
If Sileus in his wrath with me, because
I would not wed you with him, seeks revenge,
That were a little thing.

[*Turning slowly away from DORIS.*

It is not Sileus
Can set my brain to rock in dizzy circles,
Can set my heart to moan among the hills.
If from the north, the south, the east, the west
Spreads apprehension, it is all the same,
All from one quarter : . . .

Shall I read your scroll ?

SALOME. No, no ! you cannot see. These are the
words :

‘ Mother, there is for thee within this box
That which will make Antipater a King—
Sileus’ young mistress in Arabia hath
Devised the poison. Sileus is my friend.’

HEROD (*grasping her wrist*). You have played at this
before ; my cupbearer
Would poison me, you said, and Mariamne,
You said, had mixed the cup . . .

She, innocent !

I have come to see so wide an innocence,
Spreading like sunlight on the battlefield . . .
I will not be impatient. Presently
A criminal shall drink this in my sight.

SALOME. So did one drink before—so falling down—

HEROD (*raving distracted*). . . . This letter, stay ! . . .

[*She unrolls it before him.*

Each reed-stroke on the page Antipater's . . .
Has never reached its goal.

SALOME. But question Doris.
Do you not see she trembles ?

HEROD. She is old,
And she is very fond ; needs must she tremble.
If this (*lifting the scroll*) should prove its nature as
a truth,
How should she bear the truth—she is too old.

[DORIS *falls, clasping* HEROD'S *feet*.]

DORIS. Herod, but you will spare Antipater ?
Have mercy ! . . . He is hasting to your tents.
Do with me what you will . . . His enemies
Are thick upon him, and your ears so quick,
So open to all evil . . . Herod, listen . . .
We have such terror of you, and the phial . . .
I am ready. I will drink it in your sight—
Drink it, if first

You will make oath to spare Antipater !

[HEROD *stands erect, silent* ; DORIS *rises startled. As if unconsciously, he begins to strip* DORIS *of her ornaments*.]

HEROD. Salome,

See that the sentries keep guard, but if
This son that, as it seems, is drawing home,
Approach, at his demand, let him pass free.

[*He goes on stripping* DORIS *of her jewels*.]

Go—

Salome, call my counsellors to aid me.

Let Balbus come and quickly Nicholaus
To aid me: draw them round me in my
tent.

[*Exit SALOME. By now the ornaments of
DORIS lie in a heap on the floor.*]

DORIS. Is it for death? What would you do with
me?

Is it for death?

HEROD. Chains! Amulets!

I am unfreighting you, my camel, I
Who loaded you so costly.

[*He examines the jewels one by one as he
takes them off; some he wrenches,
others he lifts in the air and smiles as
they glitter.*]

Ah, a thing

I had forgotten, I remember now—
I bought it from an Ishmaelitish lad.
I am glad to have it back.

Ho, amulets!

To work their fascination and effects,
As still birds on their nests—these chains, pro-
tections,

I armed you with all these; these kept you
faithful—

Away!

This pearl that rose between the breasts
Of Mariamne, like a valley-dome,
Now among ruts and gritty warts . . .

Be patient!

These are my bridegroom-hands and should be
deft . . .

The knot miscarries of the jasper-stones ;
And here a collar that I cannot snap !
Let it alone !

Are you quite stripped, quite bare ?
*[He takes her by the shoulders and
pushes her out behind the rock of the
fountain.]*

Now you shall go back to the wilderness.
*[Covering her face with her hands, she runs
out toward the desert.]*

I thought she would be tethered to my grave,
Chained as my camel, and to rot beside me . . .
But she is gone, is strayed . . .

Antipater !

Would that these sands
Would sweep up solid round us as a wall,
That I might hang upon his neck and spread
A deafness through my senses to aught else,
Save that he is my son !

[His Councillors begin to file in.]

But even now

The pitiless, wise faces congregate ;
And in my bosom it is growing stranger
Than any foreign land. I cannot kill,
I cannot give award . . .

There is Shemiah—

He pleaded with me once for Mariamne ;
He pleaded I should put her in Masada,

Not take her life.

[He goes up tottering to SHEMIAH.

Shemiah, I have use

For something that you offered.

*[He takes and fondles SHEMIAH'S hands
and paces a little along with him.*

At that hour

I could not use it. Offer it again,

Shemiah! Look, it is a day of doom:

I must make accusation. But your part

Has ever been that of petitioner.

Of me you made entreaty for the Queen

That I should spare her . . . Your unanswered
prayers

Have broken in upon my sleep . . . The hour

Is now propitious . . .

(Pointing to the others.) They will give a judgment

Remorseless, if no patience. Counsel me

Your way of gentleness.

When they condemn,

As presently they will, beseech my mercy.

SHEMIAH. I cannot, King!

*[HEROD turns swiftly away from SHEMIAH
and faces the Councillors: he stops
before blind BABBAS—then slowly takes
the throne. After a struggle, he begins
to speak.*

HEROD. It is not of one matter I would speak.

It is of many kingdoms, the revolt

Of many kingdoms, and an amnesty

Is in my breast . . . a pardon.

Do not tempt
To make my breast a den of raging lions.
I cannot bear the noise.

I am accused ;
And many are accused. Antipater,
And Doris—and Salome—and myself.
Give me protection ; let me feel your presence
Around me as great wings. O my beloved,
Wait with me on the moment ! In my bosom
There are such changes as from day to night ;
More fervent and of peril more extreme
Home from the night to day.

I judged in darkness :
Now as the light shoots down on me it shows
A spectacle so wondrous, in my awe
And in my joy and terror at the vision,
I watch, I guard the vision, but for judgment
I have no faculty.

Be round me, let
No fury slash into the glassy sea !
Sustain me of your love !

NICHOLAUS.

We cannot, King.

HEROD. Aid me !

NICHOLAUS. We cannot aid you : not to mercy.

HEROD. No, no ! You are not aiding me. No, no !

You cannot aid.

[He descends the throne.]

Babbas, I saved your life,
I spared you, I was gentle . . .

There is darkness
Now in my heart, so fierce an eddying pool
Of darkness ! I am striving for my wits.
We all should be at prayer, making atonement
For this great evil that is done. I would
Abase myself in penance : but no instant
Is given me for my tears.

BABBAS. You are weeping, Herod.

HEROD. Babbas, you do not see . . . Antipater
Has ridden swift, is now at the tent-skirts.

BABBAS. I hear

His slippery, quick feet. Is he alone ?

HEROD. He comes in purple, and he beats the ground
Wildly as Cain . . .

[HEROD *drags himself back to the throne, then hides his face in his hands. There is a great silence: ANTIPATER, entering, kneels at HEROD'S feet. A voice is heard, as if a stranger were speaking.*

You thought to find me here

Dead at your feet.

(*Bowing on his hands down lower.*) I live . . .

And I can grant petitions : whisper me.

[ANTIPATER *half-rises, glancing round the circle ; then he kneels again and whispers.*

ANTIPATER. To be your son, your heir, to have no
rival,

To be your own for ever.

HEROD (*planting his hands on ANTIPATER'S neck*).

Sycophant !

O desert-tongue ! You thought to find me
here

Dead in my tent. And now we shall enact
Your deed in effigy.

Give me some wretch
The judges have condemned to death.

[*Slaves are despatched.*

Before

These holy men, you shall behold his death,
Even so effecting mine in effigy.

[*An old condemned criminal is brought in.*

The sentence of the law be done on you !

[*HEROD takes a goblet standing on a table
by him, and pours the poison into it :
but he draws back his hand from lifting
it and commands NICHOLAUS.*

Give him the cup to drink !

Drink, as an infant from his mother's bosom ;

Drink as in happy confidence. O happy !

A sucking child !

[*The man reels, falls convulsed, and dies.*

This is an image ! You

And I and Prince Antipater are seeing

Another, not this criminal, another,

As old as he in years and many sins.

Look ! but the wrinkles straighten. All is judged
And done and imaged.

Take the idol hence,

Into the dark . . . for we have seen the sight
Of which it is the carven stone, we all,
I, you, and Prince Antipater !

Now speak,
If you can heave up action to the lips . . .
[*He watches the corpse being carried out.*

Ha, but this hanging face !
The hair not dyed safe to the silver roots.
O man ! O image ! Dust as yet of stone ;
Dust, dust ! O elders . . .

Aid me !

NICHOLAUS. We cannot aid you—not to mercy,
We who have seen the picture in this deed,
The swiftness of the venom.

[*HEROD again covers his face with both hands.*

ANTIPATER (*in a shrill voice from the ground*). It was
venom

Deadly and flashing deep : it was the venom
Bred for you drop by drop. It was a cup
For you to drink and was prepared for you
Out of my banishment.

(*Kneeling upright.*) I am your blood—
I bear no absence and I bear no rival.
You drew me from the desert, from the race
You had forsworn, the race of Edom—slowly
You took my love out to yourself. As creatures,
Wild creatures, a wild horse,
With black-brimmed eyeballs, or a wild dog
tamed

Give passion of the desert to their master,
I gave my ecstasy . . . You had desired
That I should tarry by you in your sleep,
Lest any should assail. I watched you breathing,
I watched your sickness; I have seen your
eyes

Ravished of fondness—you, so hard, you care
For waking and for sleeping and for breathing
Without my voice to waken you, my touch,
My kisses . . .

I contrived your death,
As you contrived the death of Mariamne.
Yet she could live without you and beyond—
I cannot live like that, an animal
That being left of you upon the shore
Dies on the shore. *[There is silence.]*

[The silence continues unbroken.]

And where you love you killed :—
Mariamne, doubting of her love, and jealous
That she should love the air by which she lived.
Your sons, who would have loved you had you
trusted
That love you levy, but you would not trust . . .
They plotted, grew more distant, and were
strangled—

You gave the word to me—within Sebaste.
So, in your likeness, of your very nature
And colour of your passion, in my rage,
Exiled from you at Rome, and knowing you
But as a mourner for my murdered brothers,

Being of your temper and your jealousy,
I could not think of you alive. You know,
Father, that lust—by Mariamne's fate,
And by the fate of well-loved Alexander,
You know that lust. And to extinguish it
You have another victim.

[He creeps close to his father's feet.

I will lick

These dregs up from the floor, in all their venom,
If you desire my death to satisfy
That great exasperation that in Kings
Craves massacre, or that a single object
Should perish slow and of deaths multiform.

[The attendants restrain him.

. . . But if indeed

Compunction take you, if you have such love
That you would grieve for me, and start on journeys
To turn home sudden—as for Alexander—
Then you may spare me, father ; I am yours !
What will the days be to you if I perish ?

NICHOLAUS (*to HEROD*). Give judgment ! Speak !

For Prince Antipater

The judgment of our wisdom is, he dies,
And for the sin God most abhors. He is,
Attested by his hand, a parricide.

*[Unrolling the scroll of the letter in
ANTIPATER'S face.*

You sought your father's life, your father's throne.
What will the days be to him if you perish ?
Safe days !

ANTIPATER (*addressing the Councillors*). They had
been safe if he had made me
The apple of his eyes ! But his eyes turned
Away from me as from a bloody field ;
But his voice shifted in its tones the moment
It must respond to me. The way he moved
A little distance off at my approach,
Involved me in the silent certainty
I was an exile from his heart for ever.
I plotted for his life—ill have I plotted.

NICHOLAUS. Give judgment, King.

HEROD (*removing his hand from over his eyes*).

There was a counsel, elders,
And from young lips, *Banish Antipater*.
I will not take your counsel, but that counsel—
Banish Antipater . . . a little way,
Almost within my sight and yet removed . . .
Yon little fort . . . not far. Remove him from
me,

If that to him is punishment. Remove him
A stone's throw from my presence and my love.

ANTIPATER (*in a murmur*). You have tried Rome,
the miles of separation—

Venom, my full response. Near and yet severed
. . . . It whirls the death-sands !

HEROD. Take my son away,
And shut him in the little desert-fort.

ANTIPATER. As Mariamne in Masada's fort,
Beside the Dead Sea beach. . . .

HEROD. So, as I loved her !

ANTIPATER. And safe as Alexander and his brother,
Shut in Sebaste—safe ! . . .

Your fortalice is full of scorpions, owls,
Adders and stoups of water in the floor . . .

[He stands with outstretched arms, and shrieks.]

Sebaste ! No, my father, not a fort !

HEROD. I follow counsel sent in oracle.

And I have heard you speak of love as echoes

Speak of far voices to a listener—

Echoes about the rocks and little towers

Of wildernesses . . .

Take my son away,

A stone's throw from my presence and my love.

ANTIPATER. Sebaste ! Father, but they did not cry,

They did not tell their love. You heard no sound

From Mariamne, Mariamne's children ;

You do not know they loved you, and no echoes

Leap from the dumb.

HEROD. They were of royal race—

Impenetrable—sealed.

(To the guard.) Take him away !

He gnaws worse than the worms that eat my
life !

He would have killed me, as the worm that kills.

Away, away ! *[He sobs.]*

ANTIPATER. My mother, let her plead !

Beside you, faithful—and no echo !

NICHOLAUS. Prince,

The lady Doris, who had mixed the venom

In treacherous wine, now wanders on the desert,
Bare of all honour and all ornament.

HEROD. Away ! It sullies love to bandy words.

Away !—to walls deaf-mute and deafened doors !

ANTIPATER. Your feet—one kiss !

[They restrain him and he is forced away.

He turns at the tent door.

What will your life be to you if I perish ?

[Exit ANTIPATER guarded. With a wave of the hand HEROD dismisses his Councillors, but holds back NICHOLAUS by his cloak.

HEROD. Bring me a draught of water and an apple. . .

It seems, I have not eaten for a month

An apple—

That red-blush sort that creams up to the knife.

[NICHOLAUS whispers to a slave, and himself goes out of the tent, returning with water from the fountain.

An apple—

How slow you are, you do not give it me !

NICHOLAUS *(as the slave re-enters with the fruit).*

On the instant it is plucked, and from the bough

You shook but yesterday.

HEROD *(greedily).* They are ripe apples—

Yet ripening, snatched

From the voluptuous doting of the sun.

A little sharp . . .

I am fainting, Nicholas.

This faintness of sick appetite—it goads me ;

It will not let

The sunken camel drop upon his knees ;

It will not give me privilege of death.

NICHOLAUS. Wine, there is wine !

HEROD.

The juices of the apple,

The curdling juice.

[He takes a knife and begins to pare the apple.

There ! I am satiate.

How tenderly it eats.

NICHOLAUS (*watching him*). Why, King, this is your wont ; you are recovered :

And we shall have you in our midst.

HEROD (*stopping in the paring*). We ? Who ?

Antipater ?

[With a sudden revulsion of feeling he attempts to stab himself, wounding his arm as those round him snatch the knife. Then he faints.

NICHOLAUS. Hold, hold !

Madman, you shall not ! This is sacrilege :

You shall not dare, you, an anointed King.

(*Cries heard all round the tent.*) The King is dead.

King Herod, he is dead—

Is dead ! The King is dead !

HEROD (*opening his eyes*). O Nicholas,

God took the knife, and gave me of this swoon,

As safe as balmy water : Jericho

Has no such balm. What is it I had dreamed ?

And can I die as Moses of a kiss ?

A laugh !

O Nicholas, and I had shut him up
With heat of secret visits in my heart . . .
Of how I should slip down to reach him, scarcely
Biding to-morrow in my loneliness,
He in his loneliness. O Nicholas,
When I was young I heard the cries and wailings
Of Arabs when their dead are carried out :
I thought there were in him such cries for me ;
But on the air news of my death went forth,
And there was made no cry.

Call me Salome !

Call her, for I am dying.

Call her ! I have a purpose lest I die
Too hard for one that dies in solitude

[A slave is despatched.]

. . . Is she grown negligent ? Year after year
I drew the creatures that I love down to me ;
I drew my doves to call. It is my wont,
It is my pleasure, and I love to seek them,
To find them in the chambers unaware,
Breathing without suspicion or asleep.
And in her niche
I ever found Salome. Not to-day . . .
Yet she is coming.

There are many tombs

All round me, and no mourners round the tombs ;
That is not well.

NICHOLAUS.

Cæsar will mourn you, King.

Should not that be enough ?

HEROD.

No, no ! These times
Are so disordered they disorder God,
And He is grown unnatural . . .

Hereafter

There will be none to love Him in my fashion,
So royally, with so vast a pomp. Hereafter
He will lament me.

NICHOLAUS.

He will bring to mind
Your zeal for Him. He will forgive your sins.

SALOME *enters*HEROD (*raising himself*). He will avenge my wrongs.

(*To SALOME.*) I have provided,
Salome, all my lands shall weep for me.
It is a sound that in my sepulchre
Will drive the winds away.

You are astonished ?

But I have ever comforted the dead
With lamentation ; all my leisure hours,
And in the night's long idleness, and when
My power hath rested on me as a crown,
I have lamented . . .

First for Mariamne,

First and for ever . . . for the boys
Cut off, that bore her image . . . for the child
Of Doris, and for Doris, that lone mother. . . .

SALOME. What would you do, my brother ? I am
old—

HEROD. Ay, it is that ! And I would have young
voices,

And women's voices, and the cries of children,
As they had lost their mother in the wilds.
I would have young men wailing for their fathers,
And women wailing for their husbands slain.
If thou art faithful, thou wilt pledge this thing.
By Edom thou wilt pledge me, by my first,
Most ancient home . . .

There must be sacrifice !

And all my chiefs once reverend to my heart,
Whom I had so delighted in, who would not
That I should rule them, in a host must perish.
They shall be gathered in the hippodrome
Slowly as twilight musters on the plain.
It is my will that they should muster there
To hear some new decree, or for a council,
Or for the execution of some doom.
There let them tarry till my funeral,
There let my soldiers kill them one by one.

[SALOME shakes, as if palsied.

You have but ill-conceived . . . I must be
mourned.

Let there be many orphans in the land !

SALOME. They will but weep their fathers.

HEROD.

From those tears

A race will spring that shall outshine the sun.

I do not fear

To make of children orphans, or to lay

On any noble heart calamity . . .

No hurt done when the tents are broken up ;

There is no hurt

By fire or pillage ; it is when the slave
Makes accusation, when the child is hard,
When the wife gives no comfort of her beauty
That the land fades away.

Let there be orphans ;
Let there be many orphans in the land ;
Young ravens too that cry for bread, and bleating
Of many flocks unfostered on the plains.

My son Antipater

Struck at his chains, would burst them in his fury ;
He cried exultant when they cried me dead . . .
The world must be set right again. Salome,
The kingdom of the world cannot be saved,
Nor can the harvest-field yield up her fruit,
Nor can the moon rise up except in blood,
Unless the young with tears lament the dead.
Salome, are you faithful ? . . . Speak !

[He falls forward on her neck, dead.]

TRISTAN DE LÉONNOIS'

'Yseult, ma vie, Yseult, ma mort.'

'Vidi Paris, Tristano.'

Inferno, canto quinto.

PERSONS

KING MARK OF CORNWALL.

SIR TRISTAN DE LÉONNOIS, his nephew.

DUKE HOËL OF BRITTANY.

SIR KAHERDIN, his son.

DUKE AUDRET, a vassal of King Mark.

QUEEN YSEULT LA BELLE, wife to King MARK.

DUCHESS YSEULT AUX BLANCHES MAINS, wife to Sir Tristan.

BRANGAENA, the Queen's Bower-Maiden.

Courtiers, Mariners, Servants.

TRISTAN DE LÉONOIS

PROLOGUE

Outside the apse of an old chapel, at either end, is a tomb, one of chalcedony and one of beryl.

From the beryl tomb a rose-tree has broken forth : it makes an arch of red blossoms across the apse and plunges its strong shoots into the tomb of chalcedony.

Under the arch AMOR is standing with reversed torch, and in his other hand a goblet, hung with seaweeds and tarnished.

AMOR. Up from the sea-depths I have brought
This my cup in which was wrought
My spell long years afar—
Years that now are,
O Underground, thy own,
And lie beneath thy throne.

Venus came forth from out the sea,
Darkness and immensity :
Down thither have I dived,
From the gulf rived
This goblet hung with seeds,
The soundless sea-wrack breeds.

And I have brought it to thee, Death,
Up from the deep where Love's breath
First had desire and rose :
O thou, deep Close
Of Love's mortality,
A gift of love—to thee !

Lo, this encrusted thing I hold
Is full of wine, new and bold
As these red roses' tide,
That spreads them wide !
On thy old tombs I pour
From out my relic hoar.

*[He makes libation on the tomb of beryl and
the tomb of chalcedony. Then he lifts
his torch.]*

There is no rose in the world like the rose-tree of
Tintagel,
The rose that leapt and fell
From a lover's tomb ;
Its thorn and leaves and bloom
Dreaming a goal and stirred
To flight as an autumn bird,
With a track to learn,
With a space to burn,
And the air to travel,
Till in her bed of gloom
The loved is straightly caught from the tomb,
Wherever the plunging rose finds room.

This rose will not fail of his goal ;
 He has power
 To push through the tower
 Where the bells toll :
 This rose is swept along by the power
 Of his fragrance as by a soul.

ACT I

SCENE

The Hall of the Castle of Tintagel.

KING MARK and QUEEN YSEULT LA BELLE sit side
by side on their thrones.

BRANGAENA sits on the steps of the QUEEN'S throne.

*The feast is over ; the CORNISH NOBLES still sit at
the long tables.*

A BARD with oak-wreath and a great harp recoils
before the forbidding hand of YSEULT, who, with
drooped head, yet silences his lay.

KING MARK. You will not listen ? Autumn even-
ing-tide

Is pensive for its music—very heavy

At heart are autumn evenings. Will you not
listen ?

YSEULT.

No !

[*There is a long silence.*

. . . Let autumn rouse to winter ! What have
songs

To do with the unleaving branches ? Rouse

The jest ! Light up, light up !

Bring in a fool !

MARK. Ah, to be adverse to your will for ever !

I cannot give command

For Triolet to come ;

I cannot say to the grave, Make mirth, restore

Our Triolet of France to ring his bells,

And draw his flock behind him, wheresoever

His tinkle find its pasture.

Triolet

Is gone !

Will you not listen ?

YSEULT.

No !

MARK. Then bring the chess-boards !

(*To YSEULT.*) I will win our game.

CRIES. Chess-boards ! Ay, ay, the royal game !

YSEULT.

Your king—

Can I check him, can I ever check your king ?

MARK. Lights, and the board !

[They begin to play. DUKE AUDRET enters. There is silence, and the sound of the pieces as they are moved. After a while the KING laughs.]

Your knight is gone !

[The QUEEN plays on languidly. After making one of her moves, she clasps her head with her arms and yawns. Then with sudden and sharp animation she makes another move.]

YSEULT.

Check to your king, my King !

MARK. This castle, ah, this castle . . . Were you blind ?

Lord of Tintagel, to my aid

Another magic castle sweeps—safe, safe !

[YSEULT *again clasps her head round with her arms and yawns.* BRANGAENA *risés and listens.*

The squires outside are noisy.

YSEULT. 'Tis some beggar,
Or some wild creature in their midst. Ha, ha !
Your cruel squires . . .

But these are merry games,

Where there are shouts !

CRIS. Hue ! hue ! Whoop, whoop ! Hue, hue !

YSEULT (*rising*). Brangaena, listen,
A hue and cry ! Whoop, whoop !

MARK. It spoils the game.

Reprove them, Audret.

YSEULT. Hark—

The sound of little bells that ride aloft,
Like bubbles on a cataract.

CRIS. Whoop, whoop !

Fool . . . Rap his ears—

His pate !

Whip him—and soundly !

The bladder-skin, beat out his squeals.

Hoy, hoy !

Whoop ! whoop ! The clown, the ugly clown !

The gipsy !

The solemn otter !

Ha, ha, ha !

[A FOOL, *fighting his way among blows and jeers, is precipitated into the hall.*

THE FOOL.

Protection !

MARK. Of the king's sceptre, since the jester's
cannot

Subdue the people ?

(To YSEULT.) Here is company,
Here your desire.

Now will the evening speed
As Christmas-time . . .

More lights about the Queen !
Cheer, cheer !

A carpet for the fool !

A cloak !

His rags will shame us.

Dignity must wait
On such portentous wrinkles . . .

Not even ocean
Digs brown sand in such curves.

YSEULT.

Ha, ha, I never
Beheld a thing so laughable. Ha, ha !
He fixes me !

AUDRET.

With otter eyes.

YSEULT.

An otter,
A hunted, old dog-otter !

Ha, ha, ha !

Brangaena, this great fool is worth a thousand
Of little Monsieur Triolet de France . . .

Eyes—but these hunted things have eyes indeed !

MARK. Friend, you are welcome !

THE FOOL.

Sire,
Noble and good among all kings of earth,

My heart melts with its tenderness

Alas,

My folly ! Can I run away from tears . . .

Or can I fly my folly ?

[He lays his face on his arm and weeps.

*With a sudden convulsive movement his
bells tinkle ; as if warned, he gets up and
makes obeisance.*

God protect you,

Good Sire of Cornwall !

God protect you, lady !

MARK. Friend, tell us what should bring you to
Tintagel ?

Truth, fool !

FOOL. Yseult the Queen !

YSEULT. I—for this hair's sake ?

*[She holds out a glittering fold of her
tresses.*

FOOL. Gold of the sun, for that—

Lords, all must know

How I have loved the Queen.

*[Close to MARK, and making the gestures
with his hands of one who bargains.*

I have a sister,

A beautiful, dark sister, cloaked and hooded
In raven hair—wild sles her blackest eyes,
And love a bloom, a dimness on them—love
For Mark the King of Cornwall.

She is named

Brunhilda, she is dark and beautiful.

This golden queen has dazzled you and wearied ;
But my Burgundian sister I will barter
For your Yseult, out of pure love and duty.
Swift ! Make exchange !

YSEULT. Close with his bargain, Sire !
Take Brunhild, give Yseult to the brown fool,
That she may count his wrinkles in a month,
And his grimaces in a whole year's time.
Wife of a Fool—my part !

*[She laughs. The FOOL advances with
outstretched hand.]*

MARK (*laughing bitterly*). And if I give her,
What would you do with her, where take her,
Fool ?

THE FOOL. Yonder between the zenith and the
clouds—

They for her floor, the blue height for her roof—
In that large space through which the sun takes
air,

As in his garden and own solitude,
Where are no winds to make their quarrel, thither
I will lead up the Queen, and ask the sun
Gift of a crystal chamber, walled with roses
In tapestry of summer, full of light,
When Dawn plays on the crystal and the roses
The music of her freshness.

MARK. My royal lady,
No singing of my minstrels charmed your ear—
So for your punishment a fool turns poet ;
And you must hear who clamoured for a fool.

YSEULT. Brangaena, in the fields of Ireland often
We saw that country.

BRANGAENA. O sweet Queen, a country
We found when the tall grass had buried us
In spires and clover . . . ah !

MARK. The prattling jester,
He loves his words and decks them bravely out.

CRIES. Oh, a good fool ! Dwell with us at
Tintagel !

MARK. Friend, what assurance have you that my
lady

Will follow you up yonder ? You are wizen
And hideous . . .

(*To the Courtiers.*) Look, what see you to com-
mend ?

YSEULT. His eyes—he plucked them from some sad,
wild creature

Under writhed forest-bark. . . .

[*The FOOL comes close to her impulsively.*]

BRANGAENA. Fool, even by your eyes,
Why should my lady follow ?

THE FOOL. Why ?
Because I have accomplished for her sake
Many a labour, many a deed of glory,
Many a deed of daring, and for her
I have become a fool . . . for her am mad . . .
A fool !

MARK. Who art thou ?

THE FOOL. Tristan, I am Tristan,
He who so loved the Queen, who loves her yet,

Who will not cease to love when breath has ceased.

You know, you all must know that I am Tristan !

[He leads the laugh that runs round the hall. MARK joins in it, glancing wrathfully at YSEULT, who gives one sigh, as if a viol had been struck ; then, flushing with wrath, starts to her feet.]

YSEULT. Go, wretched fool, creature of evil, go !

Who brought him in ?

Out from my presence—Mark,

Out from your presence send him.

MARK.

Softly, Queen !

You cried aloud for jests—this is the jest.

Now be you merry as at Christmastide !

Deny not to the fool his privilege

To tongue whatever folly lifts the heart

By laughter and derision into ease.

With fools we play the fool.

THE FOOL.

Do you remember,

How, dying of the venom that I took

From Morhout's sword, I landed on your shore,

Faint, with my harp, and how you healed my anguish,

And healed me into health ? . . . Do you remember, Queen ?

YSEULT. Hunt him away—out from my sight with him !

[The FOOL chases the Nobles and Squires to the door.]

THE FOOL. Out of my sight !

Dolts, wiseacres, leave me to use my hour
With Queen Yseult. I am come to love the
Queen.

Grant me her privacy.

[*The KING laughs. YSEULT, red with
deeper wrath, stamps her foot.*]

YSEULT. Sire, hunt him out,
As he was hunted in. Let him be lashed and torn.

MARK. Softly—a woman must not blench from light
Of drollery and wit.

THE FOOL (*more passionately*). O Queen Yseult,
Do you remember, when you laid the splinter,
You found in Morhout's skull—your kinsman's
skull—

Against my mutilated sword, and lo,
It fitted close and you beheld me Tristan,
And raised my sword to kill, but did not kill me ?
I was a wondrous knight !

Do you remember, Queen ?

YSEULT. Cursed be the mariners of Cornwall, cursed,
Who brought you to this shore and did not throw
you

To the rolling quiet of mid-sea. My curse !

[*The whole room is gathered round with
strenuous attention, broken every now
and then by a malicious laugh.*]

THE FOOL. Do you remember, Queen ? . . .

[*YSEULT descends the steps of the Throne,
taking BRANGAENA'S hand.*]

YSEULT.

Teller of tales,

What is there to remember in vain dreams ?

In prattle of delusion? Yesternight

You drank too deep—and it is drunkenness

That spins for us these tales.

THE FOOL (*with more passionate accents*). True! I
am drunk.

And of such draught, that never of its frenzy

My heart-throbs will be stayed.

O Queen Yseult,

Do you forget that noon on the mid-sea,

That mid-May noon, so warm and beautiful,

When you were thirsty? Daughter of a King,

Do you forget? We drank from the same cup;

We drank, and ever has the fatal glory

Astounded me, as planet-struck. O Queen,

Do you not yet remember

—what we drank?

[YSEULT has been leaning on BRANGAENA and gazing at the FOOL with wide, terrified eyes. At his last appeal she hides her head in her mantle and breaks from BRANGAENA. But the KING, holding her ermine cloak, draws her back and seats her again at his side.

MARK. Wait, wait, a little, fair, impatient one!

We will set fooling to another tune ;

Or where is our festivity, where Christmas,

Where is the red-lit winter?

Fool, your art,

Your trade ?

THE FOOL. To serve great kings.

MARK. And can you hunt
With dogs and with gyr-falcons ?

FOOL. As I will !

With traps I capture swans and geese and doves
Of the wild-wood ; with harriers in the cloud
I run the cranes and herons. *[All laugh.]*

MARK. When you fish

What do you draw out of the freshets, brother ?

THE FOOL. Wolves of the night, great wood-bears ;
and my falcons

Drop goats before me, foxes and specked does ;
My hawks run hares to ground : and I can
brew

Herb-broths, and tune the harp and sing in
tune.

I can love queens—defend myself, with staff,
As you have seen to-day, and tell you tales.
Heigh for my sceptre !

It can rouse slow blood.

Wake laggards . . .

Up, ye Cornish Lords, to hunt !

You have already eaten—I have livened

Your long repose—Up, men ! . . .

The bells, the bells, the bells !

Let out your hounds to echo them !

MARK.

Brave fool !

To hunt—the trail lies well.

AUDRET.

Sire, as you ride

I would ride with you and would somewhat
say.

*[The FOOL noisily drives all out, and
descends the steps.]*

MARK. Seek me !—Yseult, this hour of bitterness
You roused, and I in vengeance kept awake,
May God forgive ! Let us forgive each other.
Seek rest—as I the holy dusk and dew
Through which I track the wolf. I am ashamed
Your lash could make me heat your cheeks.
Forgive !

YSEULT. I could not longer
Have listened to these follies ; I am weary.
I suffer, Mark !

MARK. The evening give you grace,
Its grace !

YSEULT. Farewell, my lord !

MARK. Farewell, poor Queen.
Repose—forget ! We were feasting—we are
men.

*[He kisses her brow and turns away. The
FOOL on the steps, leading down to the
passage, watches with lit eyes. As the
KING passes he leaves the steps, doffs
and shows a bare head.]*

Fool, if she call, no more of thy chimeras ;
No more that name be mentioned to the Queen.
Amuse her with some tale of love—
Some debonair, gay plot. Serve me.

THE FOOL (*kissing his hand to the KING*). Hunt first !

[*The KING and his following go out.*

Suddenly the FOOL, covering his face with his hands, sinks a heap on the steps of the great hall that descends into the passage. YSEULT is in BRANGAENA'S arms.

YSEULT. Why was I born ? It is a bitter thing
When life is dust and ashes and yet lives
Beheld and laughed across.

Would this veil were
The stirless pall of death, laid over, over !

There was—where is he . . .

That fool, wry monster, twisted in a cross ?

Brangaena, in ill-hour he came within :

He is a mage, enchanter, divinator :

He knows what you and I and—Tristan only

Can know ; by magic and by lot he knows.

I am undone. I perish . . . fall in ruins !

BRANGAENA. O loved, but if

It should in truth be Tristan . . .

YSEULT.

Tristan—that !

He has a brow the light makes shadow on,

And hair as ruddy and as full of leaf

As beech-leaves when they crisp and cling in frost.

This counterfeit of devils,

This hideous creature, Tristan !

But God curse him ;

Cursed be the hour that he was born, and cursed

The ship that sailed him nor with warping timbers

Could draw him to these salt depths where the
cup

Of my enchantment rolls !

BRANGAENA. The mad magician
May be a chosen messenger from Tristan.

YSEULT. From Tristan who has blabbed, and told
what noon

Covered in cloth of gold, as a great harp

Is covered from corrosion. Vile the lips

That chirp what the great covered harp withholds !

BRANGAENA. Perchance to win your credence,
Secrets are told——

YSEULT. I do not think as you.

Nothing reminded me of life, no pressure

Or storm of the olden ages drove upon me ;

Nothing but wonder like the pain of death.

[She groans repeatedly.]

But find him—learn if any recollection

Leap in you as you question him.

[Hearing voices the FOOL has raised his head, and listens with a face full of despair ; as BRANGAENA comes down the steps to him, he drops his staff and bells, that roll down the steps, tinkling faerily.]

THE FOOL. Brangaena,
Brangaena, frank, adored, Brangaena, listen ;
Pity me, by the love of God !

BRANGAENA (*seized with panic*). What fiend

Taught you my name—a hell-burnt, hideous fool ?

THE FOOL. Long have I known it. By my head
once ruddy,

Unless my reason with my hair was sheared,

'Tis you who are the cause of all my sorrow,

Through you I am a madman and a fool.

Was it not you that failed to guard the philtre

I drank upon the sea, that Yseult tasted,

That was her mother's bride-gift to King
Mark ?

Yseult, my life, my death—you gave us wine

Of love to drink—then gave yourself a victim,

A sacrifice vowed to atone your crime.

Do you no more remember ?

*[He has risen up and sets his eyes on her
burningly.]*

BRANGAENA *(with a shriek of terror)*. No !

*[She turns and runs up the steps. He
follows her precipitately.]*

THE FOOL.

Have pity, pity !

Yseult—

[He finds himself facing YSEULT. BRANGAENA falls at her feet, hiding her face. He opens his arms wide, as if to clasp the QUEEN to his breast ; but, shamefaced and wrung with agony, she recoils. He trembles and retreats towards the wall by the door, against which he supports himself.]

I have lived too long ! Yseult
denies me—

Rejects me, scorns to love me, deems me vile.
She hears not, feels not, as the blind, who know
The flower by scent, the flower by touch ; who
 know

The stranger by his breathing, and the friend
By the familiar breathing, as a power
Of the air coming forward.

Ah, the blind

Are fearless ; ah, the blind
Are sure—Yseult rejects me !

[*He advances again.*
If you loved—

YSEULT (*creeping near him*). I doubt ; I cannot
tell . . .

I do not know you, Tristan.

THE FOOL.

Queen Yseult,

I am Tristan—he that has so loved you, Queen !
(*With new energy.*) Do you remember the false
chamberlain

Snowed flour between my bed and the King's
couch,

A lance-length severed, where you lay alone,
And the lance-length I leapt—our hearts were
joined :

But my fresh wound burst sudden, bled its drops
Upon your sheet, upon the mealy boards,
Betraying us to death !

YSEULT (*she draws near, fascinated*). And Tristan
pleaded

On his proud knees for me . . . His face was level

As a white river to the King's hard gaze,
 While little waves of anguish moved his lips. . . .
 THE FOOL. And then the King
 Repented him of fire as instrument
 To punish your offence and cast you forth
 Among his lepers ? . . . Nay, forget, forget !
 Let me not see that memory on your face . . .
 Think how you laid your head upon my body—
 Your golden head, and I its pillow—
 The evening I had rescued you. Forget
 The unbearable ! . . .

YSEULT. That Tristan took a wife.
 THE FOOL. Virgin she is, God pardon me ! This
 ring

Fell to the ground upon my marriage-night. . . .
 YSEULT. The ring—the ring of jasper, the green ring !
[She opens her arms wide.]

Thine ! Take me, Tristan !

[He enfolds her silently—then, after a while he speaks in his own natural voice, with uncontorted face, beautiful under its dark stain.]

TRISTAN. Love, what of the ring ?
 A dog—old Husdent—
 Had known me of his instinct ; but a semblance
 Checked you . . . ah, woman, woman ! . . . and
 a ring

Contents your unbelief, a bare, green stone.
 YSEULT. It may be all enchantment, all illusion ;
 But by my vow that when I saw this ring,

Though it should lose me, all that you commanded
Of wisdom or of folly should be done—
On my soul's faith, if this be wise or foolish—
You see me—take me, Tristan !

*[She falls in swoon on his breast. He
kisses her eyes and her face, till she
revives and smiles to his smile.]*

TRISTAN.

Not to know

Love in his very person ! If the god
Of heaven comes as the lightning, as a Fool
Comes the great Lord of Jove. After wild Love
Men raise their hue and cry. He fills the ears
Of the beloved with eddies, with the sound
Of love as of a sea that tosses wrecks,
Where all is madness : and he comes half-white,
Half-black, with jangling pulses, all the air
And every current surging to the throb
Of frenzied bells—and when he looks like hatred
He is most Love, most god-like ; when despised,
He thinks of the old spheres he tuned at first,
That are the worlds.

Have you wept for me, Yseult ?

I have not wept ; I sicken
And waste away. My death is very near ;
I shall not come again.

A nightingale

I drew you, after parting, to the orchard ;
My anguish, like a thread, guided your steps
To our trysting-fir.

Then for three years I wandered ;

The earth around was silent ; you were silent.
I feigned myself a leper. You had listened
To tales that I had fled an enemy,
Conjured to stand in your all-hallowed name—
And when I asked you alms, beneath the leper
You saw me and refused me, and at last
Broke in a laugh that shattered me as levin
The doomed hearth it has struck.

YSEULT. That laugh ! O Tristan,
Within the church I fell upon the pavement,
My arms cross-stretched.

TRISTAN. You knew me as the bird
Of love ; you knew me as the death-in-life
Of love, even as a leper. When I came
For the last time, a Fool, you gave no sign.

YSEULT. I kept my vow of love—the ring, the ring !
To you, O Love. . . .

TRISTAN. I promised on saints' bones,
Laid on God's shrine, your father and your mother,
That loyally I would bear you over sea
To Mark of Cornwall . . . and that oath was vain.
This little ring has held.

YSEULT (*in a low breath*). A virgin still !
She is not wife—ah !

[She lets her breath pass freely.

Strain me to your heart,
And let our hearts be broken in their mould,
And we be joined for ever. Lead me, Tristan,
Away, away to the Islands of the Blest,
To the country where the song is never ended

That mightiest poets dream, from which no sighs
Return, where we shall be. Do you remember—
It was your promise when the sparrows twittered,
And when the wall of air broke down with dawn,
And Tristan in the orchard from Yseult
Was driven away ?

TRISTAN. I said it was no sun
That lighted the alternate blocks of blue
And grey that build Tintagel.

YSEULT. Tristan, Tristan !
No more to part !

TRISTAN. I soon will hold my promise.
Have we not drunk all joy, all misery ?
The cup is nearly void, the time approaches
When this deep prophecy within my spirit
Comes to its term ; and when I call, Yseult,
Will you be ready ? Will you come, Yseult ?

YSEULT. Tristan, my faith ! You know that I shall
come.

Your hands, your hands—the ring !

TRISTAN. Your tremulous lips,
Dearer than any faith a ring can plight !

YSEULT. Your eyes—what sorrow
And yet content—their love is so entire !
You never seemed to look at anything
Save me you held within them. But your hair,
My glory—gone, gone !

TRISTAN. Paid away—red gold
To buy this moment.

YSEULT. And your paleness covered. . . .

TRISTAN. A gipsy stain for this mad wayfaring.

YSEULT. Tristan, your voice—its nearness! Very far

Are other voices. I could sob with wonder
To have beside my ear deliciousness
Of such warm shock. . . . To-night, to-night be
ours!

TRISTAN. Ah, if to-night . . . one parts more utterly
If one must part at dawn.

Death, death, O death!
To drink the very soul in her, then part—
Better the jangled bells of folly, better
A jester's laugh! Alas, for us!

BRANGAENA (*who has been watching by the door.*
throws up her arms). The King!

MARK *enters with his following*, AUDRET *at*
his side

AUDRET. You see—they sever!

Here is the proof. My life on this disguise.
He is no Fool.

[TRISTAN *throws back his hood, shows his*
shaved head and contorted features.

TRISTAN. Old Fool, I am no Fool!

I am Sir Tristan, Tristan de Léonois.
The Queen has heard my suit. She is a gentle,
Fond Queen! Fair Lords, to-night I shall embrace
her.

Do you not know she loves me? Ha, ha, ha!
Sir King, I thank you . . . Ha, ha, ha!

I cannot tell . . . So hideous and so gay !

Marc, in an evil hour he came to us.

My head . . . oh, weary, aching ! . . .

I have heard follies and am dazed. I know
not. . . .

MARK. Brangaena, help ! We will support the
Queen,

And you shall couch her.

Let no sound be made !

No sound within the castle ! . . . Hush !

[The laughter ceases near and then far.]

ACT II

SCENE

A vessel on the sea.

QUEEN YSEULT LA BELLE *and* SIR KAHERDIN;
*sailors moving about. The QUEEN is in hunting
green—a falcon on her wrist.*

YSEULT. O the wild sea !

How like a misty juggler is the sea—
Such transformations ! Glass of deepest dew
For days, now wild and grievous.

Look, Sir Kaherdin !

A dusky cloud,
With dusk below on ocean, like a nest
Deserted by a riding bird ! What strangeness,
What mischief and what strangeness !
While little, deadly scuds wander the wind,
The adamant wind.

What wild adventure,
From the wild instant in the casement-light,
When, at Tintagel, as a ring of Tours,
You sparkled on me my own jasper ring,
With whisper of command, and I a promise,

To journey to Sir Tristan ! . . . Wild the morning
I flew my falcon and she blocked
High on your mast, her mistress seeking her !
Sir Kaherdin,
I flew my falcon to your ship and I
Followed my falcon's flight,
Simply because this ring was planted green
Upon my hand and on this ring my oath.
You are a stranger to me.

KAHERDIN. O fair Queen,
I carried on my hand your jasper ring,
Across this flood of sea ;
And my great friend, Sir Tristan, slipped it
there,
With story of his sorrow,
Murmured to tears I would not watch. Unsay
I am a stranger—but a friending stranger,
If you are bent to have me strange—your squire
And servant.

YSEULT (*after a brooding silence*). By what right, Sir
Kaherdin,

When I ascended to your ship with escort
Of the Duke Audret, did you shift the plank,
When I was safe, and plunge him in the sea ?

KAHERDIN. Whew ! By what right ?
The right to kill Sir Tristan's enemy.
The man was feasting-fellow,
And counsellor and creature to King Mark :
Simply as I should kill a bird
Injurious to a country-side. And joy

It was to me to bring him down. What right ?
The right I have to carry you away,
To bear you over sea—
Love's right !

*[He moves away and looks over the sea.
His Captain joins him, and they talk
together anxiously.]*

YSEULT. Why then I am a captive—and of Love !
I thought I was in freedom and to have
My will, my love's accomplishing, my pleasure,
As in some distant fairyland. I took
This ring, I asked no question. Haughtily
I swept down from Tintagel, in my garb
A huntress, and Duke Audret smiled at me,
And said the King would joy of my fresh
colour.

I am here, still in huntress's dress, though royal :
I am here and for my prey.

[She looses her falcon on a sea-bird.]

Who-whoop ! Begone !

KAHERDIN (*running to her*). Queen, Queen ! . . . Too
late, the seagull is struck down :

There is blood upon the waves !

These lowering skies
Already fright the crew . . . now this omen !
Pray God the sailors do not mark the stain !
This sport is deadly.

YSEULT. Ah, she scorns the flesh !

Why lo, why lo ! What, Destiny, my merlin,

What, Destiny ! *[The falcon comes to her fist.]*

KAHERDIN.

Queen, is it only sport

That we are bound on? Have you no compassion?

YSEULT. There has been blood upon the waves before,

Duke Audret's blood: then you had no compassion;

You did not mark the stain . . .

There, take my falcon, take her,

Destroy her . . . Let her not be captive—there!

Let her not fail of her desire . . .

[She sobs over the bird and resigns it to

SIR KAHERDIN, *waving him from her.*

How wet the rain is on my cheek!

How I am left alone! . . .

Like this I was led forth,

A captive to King Mark; my Ireland left

Behind me, all I loved—my still-room, my long halls,

My free-lipped people, my fond mother left

Behind. For me no more green land, no more

Honour and youth! I found myself a captive,

Snared on the sea and destined

Then for King Mark, as now for Tristan—destined!

And now again a ship, and now the sea!

[She gazes out on the water.

How great the sea is, and how full of rumours!

How greater is the sea grown suddenly!

I am alone, and out of all this water,

And out of all this cloud,
I hear a tempest puling at its birth.
Brangaena !

[There is no reply. Boatswain's voice rings out.]

BOATSWAIN. Tempest ! Braid up them sails,
Strike topmast to the cap !

YSEULT. Tempest ! I am alone. What could Brangaena

Do for me in these heavens ?

O Tristan, Tristan,

I am alone !

And we must be together on the sea !

KAHERDIN (*afar*). The furrow of the vessel is a
torrent,

A whirlpool . . . Save the boat, hitch her
aboard,

Over the poop ! *[He passes out of sight.]*

SAILORS. A'heigh, a'heigh, a'heigh !

There is no boat.

The ropes slide in—no boat !

She is mid the waves.

She is under them.

She is lost.

OTHER SAILORS. A hungry sea !

What drip

Of the naked feet of surges as they rush
Across our planks.

This rain, this wind—this death !

Our shrouds are almost broke and
blown away.

Starboard ! Take heed !

Starboard—so-ho !

Be damned or help us !

Peace ! God bless the man !

CAPTAIN'S VOICE. Hold—keep her thus. Hold there !

A hand, my boys ! Lash sure the helm a'lee ;

We can no more ! Make fast and let her drive ;

Let her lie under seas and let her drive !

[The storm closes down.]

YSEULT. But this is like a charm—

I stand as fearless as in Africa

Among my lions . . . I have stood thus in childhood

Quite solitary when the nights were dark.

I call these elements about me softly,

As softly as a wizard . . . They are curds !

I crush them in my hands.

VOICES. We sink, we are lost for ever.

We are dead men.

Our light is out.

Blessed and Sacred Lady,

Pray our dear Lord !

In Manus . . .

Save !

The current washes us. Alas ! We drown.

[KAHERDIN tears through the veil of wind and rain. He lashes her to a mast.]

KAHERDIN. Queen, for your life . . . for his !

[He is driven away by the hurricane toward the spot where the Captain and some sailors are trying to save a man, who has just been swept over.]

YSEULT.

It makes no change—

Only, now they have bound me, I look forth
On all that I have suffered as on spots,
And cities in a landscape. Tristan, Tristan,
I see thee as we parted on the edge
Of the forest and you led
My palfrey, and you held
The bridle ready in your hand to yield it
Back to King Mark. We parted from the forest,
Tristan, for what ? For cold and poverty,
For cold and hunger, as two peasants might :
The tempest was too strong for us, the wind
Blew through your ragged cloak—you lit a fire
Sometimes in the mid-forest and sat down,
And stared at it and dreamed as a dull hunter
By any winter hearth !

. . . Here is a fire.

[She catches at the lightning.]

An arrow and a momentary lamp !

Here are the winds—

And here in some sharp crevice of my heart
Is Tristan . . . now indeed I am enchantress,
And hold him to me, as I hold the wind ;
And do not call upon his name, but hold him
At pleasure, at my pleasure, in a niche—

Or chase him as a fowler for my pleasure.

O wind of fire !

Tristan, no more in a far country—now

Swept inward on my heart, and we together,

Deaf to all noise, at the still roots of fire,

Where they branch living up, at the mid
core

Of whirlwind, where the winds are intercoiled

To break forth to their quarter ! Wind of fire !

[BRANGAENA is revealed in a cleft of light.

BRANGAENA. What is this singing through the wind ?

(A clear laugh is heard.) Where is she ?

YSEULT. No eagle rides so high ;

No moon so fast flees through the clouds ;

Tristan, no little leaf upon the stream

Voyages on so buoyantly—the wind

Couches me on her plumes . . . This travelling

Is of Love's very pace. O wind of fire !

BRANGAENA. I have not heard her voice so jubilant

Since she sang free across the Irish lakes.

[KAHERDIN, driven against her by the
wind, touches her ear with his lips.

KAHERDIN. The wheel still stands . . . Three men
are overboard. [He is blown from her.

BRANGAENA. Each quite alone in the tides, then at
the base

Of the fathoms, still alone ! And she must
die

In these waters—these deep graves ; go down to
death !

(To YSEULT.) O loved, you will not reach the shore—desist !

The sea will overtake us . . . how it runs !

The lightning—hoh !—will drink our life !

You will not reach Sir Tristan ; never more

Will you look upon his face.

YSEULT.

Brangaena ! Close,

Knot yourself in my arms ! . . .

[*They clasp: YSEULT strokes BRAN-
GAENA'S head.*]

These voyages
Are very prosperous. You brought me fortune
On that dear voyage. I had drunk with Mark,
Except you had been faithless in your charge,
And on your bed-shelf laid the little phial :
But I have drunk with Tristan. Every breath
That I would breathe again—all of my years
That is not with the dust is of your sweet
And reckless error.

Cleave to me, beloved,

Adventure with me !

BRANGAENA.

Pray ! We are near death.

Let me not lose you . . . Pray !

YSEULT (*shaking her head*). I had drunk with Mark,

Save for your error : I have drunk with Tristan.

BRANGAENA. Consider but the moment. Loved,
the corpses

Are washing past . . . See, see !

YSEULT. The storm has sundered wide away. How
light

They wash upon the waves !

I am cut sharp,

These ropes against my heart . . .

Brangaena, go,

Fetch me Sir Kaherdin, for the great wind

Is folding up its pinions, for the sky

Is massing thunderous . . .

The sun is scorching, and I feel the knots.

[BRANGAENA *leaves her.*

Am I deserted ?

My envoys fled ? This silence has no clefts

For the rock-pigeons . . . Brittany in sight,

So close at hand, so close—a monument

It looks—and I would sail away from it :

A foreign shore ; the ships

Are painted different, like flowers

Of another country. This is not the land

He promised me. Alack, I am the fool.

And what now is my errand ? O Tintagel,

It is a tame, low coast. What do I here,

And here in majesty ? Let them not dream—

Not dream . . .

I will not take the buffets of his Court.

I . . . O my fool !

[KAHERDIN *approaches with* BRANGAENA.

KAHERDIN (*at a distance to the sailors*). Clear down

the decks, set south our wheel . . . Unroll

Our snowy sails to daylight ! Wide their wings !

[*Joyously approaching* YSEULT.

We have sighted land. . . .

YSEULT. I am writhed, I cannot stir—

Oh, swift ! Unknot the cords.

KAHERDIN (*dazzled by her beauty*). Or shall I leave
you bound, my Sovereign Huntress,
And so deliver you to Tristan—heigh ?

You loosed the storm ; you have cost many
lives . . .

Shall I unknot you ? [*He looks up at her.*

YSEULT (*straining from the cords*). But who is it
speaks ?

KAHERDIN (*hastily unknottng the cord*). What can it
matter,

My sorrow — who I am ! Has the rope
jarred ?

The little smart will heal . . . I shall present
you

Safe to Sir Tristan—and so beautiful ! . . .

The rain has scarcely dashed your dress. Your
falcon

Is cherished for you. . . . Shall I fetch your
falcon ?

I did not listen to your cruel word

Let her not fail of her desire. She shall not !

Nor shall lord Tristan fail of his desire.

YSEULT. Who are you ? Tristan's friend ?

But I have never heard him name your
name.

KAHERDIN. Nor had he uttered yours until the
morning

I stepped aboard my vessel.

. . . I have knowledge
Of many things that you must overcome.
There is no welcome for you on our shores ;
My father had no knowledge of my sailing—
Yonder is Carhaix—underneath that cloud
Sir Tristan lies. There are so many things . . .
If you can put them all away and voyage
To Brittany, as I sailed to Tintagel,
It will be nothing, when you see Yseult—
Nothing.

YSEULT. Yseult ? There is but one Yseult.

KAHERDIN. O Queen, there is Yseult of the White
Hands—

Nothing ! My sister—that is nothing too . . .
I gave that up in my great love for Tristan :
But she is fast his wife. . . .

YSEULT (*after a long pondering*). I do not think I can
touch land again,
And very certainly I cannot live
In any ceiled house, in any palace.
Bear him down to me, we will take him in,
And we will give him tendance on the seas.

KAHERDIN. No, lady, we must do Sir Tristan's
will.

He is our Prince ; my father is beside
him,

My sister by him—

We cannot banish these. No, you must climb
The steep, and then the stairs, and face the
crowd,

And bear the whispers of the crowd, and
bear

My sister's face. [YSEULT *considers.*

YSEULT. Then there must be procession,
And singing through the streets. I shall come
royal

To visit him in state.

KAHERDIN. But he is dying.

We do not think of you and of your state ;

We only think of Tristan, we so love him,

We cannot let him die—

We cannot bear to hear him moan. O lady,

Slow in compassion, will you let him die ?

YSEULT (*rocking in anguish*). Melt me ; you do not melt !

I have not left my state of sovereignty,
And my great honour as a queen, nor left
King Mark, my husband, nor have I deserted
Tintagel, nor have broken with my own
Bitter and sweet captivity, nor made
My throne a hollow place, that I should heal
One who is but impatient of his pain.

[She turns away and looks out.

The sun is sudden bright . . . I see

Something that shines out hard ; it does not
stir,

Does not grow nearer ; it remains a speck.

(Turning back.) What is it?

[KAHERDIN *at a sign from the Sailors has left her side and is speaking with them.*

[YSEULT takes BRANGAENA'S hand in hers and leans her other hand on the wrist of the hand she has grasped.

Now I see that little speck,
And note the tiny dottings on the shore,
I recollect how I have left Tintagel,
And the wide breasts of the heaving sea, to
sit

Beside his bed—and presently
When he is healed, depart ; for I will give him
The things he asks for . . . But my feet are
held

Back at the heel : I cannot land, I cannot
Be so acclaimed—

We will sweep past the coast,
Until the ship shall enter its own kingdom,
And haven of itself. I cannot land !

[To KAHERDIN, who approaches.

Sir Kaherdin, you must put back the ship.

KAHERDIN. No more commands ! I cannot serve
you more.

The sails hang to the masts ;
And we are strait becalmed. Will this not melt
you ?

He is dying, our great Tristan, dying,
And yet he cannot die,
And yet he will remain without your face.

[She takes the sail and wrings it in her hands : then speaks, as if possessed, and with the actions of a mime.

YSEULT. There are so many ways ! Not come to
you !

But I will surely come to you in sleep,
And move about the room. . . . Not tend on
you !

I have seen you thus before. What, hide from
me ?

You were worse-featured, as a fool, a leper,
My sunken One !

There, there ! I will not look . . . The fire is
dead ;

You must have warmth.

[She kneels as if with faggots in her hand.

Tristan, I let my mother
Nurse you before. I was as green, young wood,
Ill-furnished . . . and I let my mother nurse
you !

But I am shaking now with jealousy.

Yseult's Yseult—Yea, I am Queen Yseult—

[She rises.

My raiment rustles soft. Tristan, but this
Is sweeter magic than the cup. You bless me ?
You must not—that must be when you are healed.
(*Shrinking*). Yes, presently
I look into your hurt . . . not so impatient,
So anxious ! You must let me raise your
head.

Now you must drink, Beloved . . .

*[She falls back into BRANGAENA'S arms
with a shrill cry.*

BRANGAENA. Is it a vision ?

YSEULT. No, no ! He may be dreaming and in dreams

I must be talking to him . . . It retires !

Mute is the darkness, but more mute the sun.

I cannot labour to him any more.

KAHERDIN. The whiteness of her mouth, her face !

Brangaena,

Wine for your mistress.

YSEULT. I will drink no wine !

She dare not bring me wine upon the sea ;

She dare not with her woman's hands approach

Mine with the cup. [BRANGAENA trembles.

KAHERDIN. Queen, Queen, but you will faint.

YSEULT. I shall not faint.

[*Raising herself heavily and looking round
on the blue spaces.*

Think of the draught ; think of that summer
sea,

The summits of the sea !

Look yonder ! In no foam a porpoise rolls . . .

[*Pressing to the side of the vessel.*

Tristan had turned

Away from me, dumb in the over-measure

And the extravagance of his desire,

Having drained the magic draught . . .

I followed him . . .

How should I ? Drawn on forward, as a tide.

He heard me . . . and I heard my steps . . .

[*She laughs as if she were alone.*

Beyond
The bay a porpoise rolled for the sun's joy.
As still a noon as this—the elements
So wreathed together, as before us now,
And the still sea that beat up as a sun.
Brangaena, you
Cast down the cup into a void like this,
Into low, breezeless sea !

BRANGAENA. Peace, peace !

Turn from the blaze, kneel down with me and pray.

YSEULT. Brangaena, in a calm ? . . .

This moves me you can pray.

[She gazes out on the water.

Power of the Sea !

It is a wall against me. Far away
Is Tristan, for a calm divides far more
Than leagues of air—
I shall not move to him, till, as a chapel
Wafted of angels, I am slided down
To lay my tomb beside him, in his tomb.

[She moves down the vessel, looking in the water: KAHERDIN follows her anxiously. BRANGAENA kneels and prays.

The ocean only of its movement heaves,
Not onward to the shore . . . We must take
temper

Of our condition, show its loveliness,
Who are within the firmament as spirits
Within a pearl . . .

(*With low laughter.*) We must beguile the time.

[*Turning and speaking shrilly in KAHERDIN'S ear.*

Speak to me of Sir Tristan. He was young
When first my mother tended him, his hair
Deep as a bud is deeper than the flower :
His beauty startled me.

Is his hair grown again,
The beautiful, deep russet, deepening hair ?

[KAHERDIN *weeps.* *She lays her hand on his shoulder.*

You know he travelled to me as a fool ;
And once he travelled to me as a leper :
These images are blocked against the sun.
Have mercy on me, Kaherdin !

KAHERDIN.

Behold !

The sea is as a web we cannot pierce :
There is no comfort there, no mercy there.
But what of that ?
For he is white and blemished as a leper,
For he is wild and crazy as a fool ;
And, if the calm should break, he would affright
you
With his wild looks. His hair is colourless,
Is dead, his visage
Measled with venom. Queen, you would not
know him—

How should you, if you think but of his beauty ?

[YSEULT *wrings her hands and turns from*
KAHERDIN.

YSEULT. . . . We must beguile the time.

[*She retraces her steps and disturbs
BRANGAENA at her prayer.*]

Tell me, Brangaena, of the roots you plucked . . .

He is wasted ; Kaherdin

Tells me he is sore-wasted. As a bird

Beating about my head I take this knowledge.

. . . You see the vessel

Stands still for ever. Let me hear the charms.

BRANGAENA. Loved, wherefore ? But the roots I
have forgotten.

I am so sleepy. Is it for my torture

You question me ?

YSEULT. The roots, the squealing mandrake—

It must be painted all upon your brain.

. . . You see the vessel

Stands still forever. Let me hear the charms,

The incantations—sing to me some snatches

Of the invocation, of the stirring-tune,

The benison. Remember

You were preparing for my wedding-night.

Did you not laugh and jest and kiss together ?

I thirst as a parched honeycomb—

The little, ribald rhymes, the lullabies,

The couplets, the forbidding ! Queen Yseult,

How looked she on that day ?

A child, I heard

Your footsteps plodding in the upper room,

And roused and fed my dogs.

BRANGAENA.

A child. Let be !

YSEULT. I had no waking
From childhood and no waking into love ;
It was all thrust on me.

BRANGAENA. Your lady-mother
Was clad that day in a deep brown, with spots
And currents in the web.

YSEULT. But of the philtre !
Was there no burthen to the ritual,
Among the spurting juices
Of the alembic and the magic wheel—
No music for the shredding of the herbs ?

BRANGAENA. Your mother did not sing.

YSEULT. The deep-brown robe,
No music ? [*She sighs deeply.*]

BRANGAENA. . . . Stay, there was
A music : I can give it you no more
Than the smell, the fresh smell of the herbs and
flowers
As they were bruised that day . . . There is a
music
Comes from the pain,
As it were startled and escaped. . . .

YSEULT. No pain !
[She looks down more wistfully into the water.]

Enumerate the flowers,
The flowers, the spices. Did you pluck the flowers?
Tell me their names,
And how the sweet brew thickened from the cast,
And drenchèd leaves.

BRANGAENA. No, no! I am too old,
And all that I remember of that day
Is that I pledged my faith. I cannot choose . . .
Yet, if I must—She bade me fetch sea-holly,
With poppies of the sand.

It was a marvel

To see her nip the little seeds and count them,
The innumerable, eyed seeds, and count them over
As clean as they were pearls.

YSEULT. You are smiling—ha !
At last a smile !

BRANGAENA. 'And where the sphinx-moth hives,
Brangaena, rest you in the furzy wood,
And look for the long-throated,
Blandishing honeysuckle, that no bee
Can ever fathom—honey for my child,
And for her lover sweetness
So haunting, so reserved, even from his grave
He will desire her ; she shall be desired
While she draws breath and even from her
grave.'

YSEULT (*who has been looking down intently into the water*). Brangaena,

There is a music rising
From the sea and from the wedges of the rocks,
And from the sluices of these hollow homes,
I hear it—dolorous—
From the edges and the sliding parapets.
Would I were nearer—such a fringe of sound !
I would descend.

And pluck the music to me as a flower.

Is it the Sirens ?

[BRANGAENA *draws her violently away.*

BRANGAENA. Oh, come back !

What should I hear ? My faculties are dulled.

What should I know ? Have pity on me, turn

Away from these deceits. I lose you, sweet,

If you bend down so far. It is the Sirens !

And I am loosing hold. In pity come !

My arms relax—in pity,

Come back to me ! Loved, pray !

[*She sinks back, her arms stretched to*

YSEULT.

YSEULT (*laughing*). It is the Sirens, if you are so childish ;

It is the music sunken in the sea.

A multitude

Remote and singing—yet a drop

At the bottom of the flood that has one voice !

No, do not fear !

I must go down to it. Do not be scared,

Do not betray me any more.

[YSEULT *dips her hands in the water and bathes her forehead ; then nestles in*

BRANGAENA'S arms.

Now I can sleep.

BRANGAENA (*with growing terror*). No ! Should you sleep,

These sounds you hear . . . Rouse, love, arouse yourself !

YSEULT. Sleeping and waking are but as the shores
Of the peace that washes them on either side.

. . . I never saw the orchard

So bright before and laden with such fruits—

Apples, and little, gadding cucumbers,

And vetches up the trees . . . Oh, see !

But not with his disparkled hair,

Not stained and hurt—he is come down to his
pleasance,

And, my sad knight, he smiles !

BRANGAENA. Child, these are dreams . . .

Yseult ! Yseult !

YSEULT. I am awake.

BRANGAENA. What do you hear, what spell is on
you ?

YSEULT. Now

It is the thrush's voice—ah, inland, deep,

Sprung from the forest. . . .

BRANGAENA. Then a dream—

Not from the sea ! Then this is but a dream

Of the great Morais Forest and the whistling

Between the branches of the summer birds.

YSEULT. No, no : this music,

I often heard it at my casement. Then

It broke my heart, so wildly

It sang of summer. It is Tristan sings,

Calling me to him for my death—the whistle

Of a bird lost at sea. It is Tristan, hark !

Kiss me, Brangaena . . . For you see the calm

Is very wide, the landmark but a cry. . . .

BRANGAENA. Why do you rise ? Where would you go ?

[YSEULT moves a little way : then turns back as if from sight of a desert.

YSEULT. Kiss me, Brangaena. Let me feel your hands !

[BRANGAENA, with a piercing cry, falls.

Her flesh is warm—it tingles on my flesh.

[She looks round helplessly, trying to touch things.

I have chilled the music and the breath of it
Cannot flow back . . . Yet I am firm and sound ;
And the ship is sailing on——

[She starts in terror at the sudden heave of the ship and lays her hand on the wheel ; as KAHERDIN and the helmsman spring forward, she fronts them white as a statue, and motionless.

ACT III

SCENE

A bare room ; at the back a terrace, with a wall breast-high, stretches against the sea. A broad step runs along under the wall ; below it a couch has been made of wolf-skins, over which is laid an emerald silk coverlid, broidered over with gold wheels. A great golden harp stands behind the couch. There is a deeply-recessed door to the left.

TRISTAN *is clinging to the top of the wall by his hands, clamped on the outer edge. His arms are supported to the elbow on the breadth of the wall. The old DUKE HOËL stands with his back to the sea, close to TRISTAN, who wears a tunic of cloth of gold. His face, when seen, is fever-struck, under the mass of his russet hair. The hour is toward evening.*

HOËL. Rest, rest !

TRISTAN. No sail !

 Clouds move across my sight. . . .

HOËL. I should be able to discern a speck,

 The mast's first climbing, for my eyes have strength

To see the stars at noontide. Let me watch,
And, for God's love, lie down.

TRISTAN (*speaking fast*). The sea, stretched out
before me as a shield,

An unscathed shield ! What arrow pierces it ?

What dances round the rock ?

What glistening pennon and what sudden toss

Of fairy-roses ? I have seen her face . . .

I cannot leave such joy out there at sea.

Hold me up firm . . .

She is travelling, as God

Travels the heavens ; she is speeding on ;

The passion of her speeding stops my heart.

But though she travel fast there is such weakness

And such despair in me I can but call,

And call to her. It is my great lament

To call upon the name that cannot hear,

To call while I have any voice—and after

God make me but a moan across the wind,

A spirit at her ears ! Yseult, Yseult,

Yseult !—A sail, a promise ! O the sea,

The sea-wind and the sea ! . . .

You know at last :

Thus was it with me, thus—the King of Cornwall

Kept her a priceless harp he could not play,

That every time I touched it was my own,

The instrument that useless

The King kept by him, mine, mine in its
music,

Each spark, the very form and hope of it.

I would have sold my God to buy that harp . . .
Thus, thus it was . . .

Yseult !

*[He bows his head on his strained arms
and weeps. After a while, he lifts his
head.]*

I have told you, father, all.

You are wise and old,
You are pitiful with the long days and quiet,
As old woods in their midst . . . I have told you
all. *[HOËL does not speak.]*

Can you tell her ?

HOËL. Let be, my son, let be ! Why should we tell
her ?

Let be !

TRISTAN. My fine high Queen, she will not come to
me,

Wrapt in disguise ; she will be wrapt in gold,
A gold crown on her head, and, in her hands
Drawn up, the deep veil of her golden hair
She will gather in her hands. I see the vision !
And of herself she will give no account ;
But simply, swiftly striding through the hall,
Pass as a sentinel the word *Yseult*.
I fear her—

She has many wrongs.

Must not your daughter know ?

HOËL. In breaking news,
God breaks it best . . .

She has marvellous black hair,

My little daughter . . .

Could you so mistake,
Sir Tristan ?—She has marvellous black hair.

[TRISTAN *groans*.

TRISTAN. I fear I am a poet. Oh, the burthen
Of seeing all creation as one God !
Have you not kissed a child for just one note
In a dead voice, and do you heed the child ?
She must be told !

HOËL. Nay, nay ! If it should kill her !
[TRISTAN, *still gripping the wall with one
arm, looses with the left arm and turns
round to face* DUKE HOËL.

TRISTAN. . . . She must be told, that she may stand
aside

As at a pageant . . . Even to be born
In the age when such a vision may be seen !
For she will come in all her majesty,
And as I have not seen her, for her eyes
Burnt low beneath her crown when I did homage,
And her cheek sank to hollow of the grave.
Remember !

I have bidden her across the waves. Have mercy !
Consider her . . . We must clothe her in great
titles.

HOËL. My son, well may we say she is a Queen,
The Queen Yseult, who of her charity . . .

TRISTAN. O sweet, but she is beautiful ; her beauty
Shines forth of her . . . She comes
As to a cry.

HOËL. She comes to bring you health ;
Fair son, this I will say :—
Your wife would have you healed, for tenderly
She loves you, Tristan.

TRISTAN. She must stand aside,
As at a pageant, she must hold her peace.
I know not what will be . . . She must be told.
Go, father, as you love me—go !

*[Wearily he clings again to the wall and
gazes seaward. DUKE HOËL leaves the
room doubtfully, then returns and stands
in mute expostulation by TRISTAN'S side.]*

What, would you watch with me ?

HOËL. For you are ill . . .
I would most gladly watch with you, my son.
You are weak ; you cannot watch.

TRISTAN. She has come down from her throne, she
has touched the sand,
I think she walks the sea. Such condescension
Is infinite, a miracle of love.

HOËL (*aside*). My little daughter—
And if I told her, what would that avail ?

TRISTAN. You shall not tell her. Watch along with me,
Watch for the Queen Yseult, and I will sing
The burthen of her coming. Let her rule !
She is strong enough to face all circumstance :
But we must take her coming as the visit
Of something holy.

Think not of your daughter,
And the few tears that she will shed. This Queen

Has left Tintagel, and the fairy palace
Is adamant behind her : this wide sea
She never can re-cross ; she wraps herself
In the sea to come to me ; it is her shroud,
And she can never take it off. . . .

HOËL. My son,
What would you have me do ? If you should
die—

And there is often death in your wild movements.

TRISTAN. What should you do ? In pictures
Have you not seen, when a bright Power comes in,
How in a corner somewhere, with veiled eyes,
There is a little group . . . I shall not die :
Nothing can be at all until she come.

HOËL. The sea is dead becalmed.

TRISTAN. I do not know . . .
We must make ready for her, long before,
As a mother for her child. It is the hope
That feeds the patience !

There must be vast carpets

Laid on the rugged steps : her feet will bleed
On the sharp rock ; for you forget
She has no garment on her but the sea,
This Queen with fading fairyland behind,
Who stoops to touch our coast.

*[He unclasps from the wall and turns with
his back to the sea.]*

I brushed the dew

Away when she has met me in the meadows,
The mossy meadows of the wood, with feet

Laid bare for silence . . .

She has met me, father,
Once in a wood, the moonlight keeping guard—
That night the dial shone as at the noon,
Keeping its point meridian.

(*In a soft voice.*) Watch with me !

Sir Hoël, you are changing, you have felt
How music can grow small and wrap itself
Into a beating odour . . . Kaherdin
Is gone as on a quest :

If he come back, if you can watch with me,
The music that you listen to, and wonder
How still the lilies are and how the stars
Are weeping over us—you have not known,
You have not seen before—all this will open,
And as the benison descends on us,
There will be passing to and fro of ships
From coast to coast; through little golden channels
They dart and glide, and there is no more sea;
But ever launching, ever setting forth,
Ever to touch the land, and all the shores
Haunted by little steps of primroses . . .

[Dreamily he turns again to the sea, fixing his eyes on it and shading them.

I thought I saw a ship.

HOËL.

No ship !

Let me support you . . . Do not fail. No matter
The sea is calm ; there is quiver through the
sea.

As it would burst its heart.

TRISTAN. No ship in harbour ?

Do not the sea-birds flap up from the surf ?

I see them ; there is scurry by the wharves !

HOËL. No, no ! We yet must wait, but there is
quiver

Now in the sea as it must burst its heart.

Loose from the wall and let me lay you down ;

Your nails are bleeding.

TRISTAN. Hold me, keep your place.

YSEULT OF BRITTANY *enters behind them*

HOËL. Hush !

TRISTAN. Who is that ?

HOËL. Your wife.

YSEULT OF BRITTANY. What are you watching for ?

Father, draw in

Our Tristan ; it is cold.

TRISTAN. Tell her !

*[His hands relax and he slips down on his
knees by the wall ; then falls back
swooning into DUKE HOËL's arms.]*

YSEULT. What is it ?

These hands are very cold . . . Oh, he is dying,

And the wide eyes are drooping, growing dark.

The long, slow breaths—a tide

To bury him away, more deep, more slow

Than breathing ! Tristan, Tristan !

He suffers ! God, awake these eyes, in mercy,

And bid the brow spring naked that so sunken

Stretches in shadow . . .

Father,

You stood together, you were looking forth ;
I came upon you as I were not one,
The nearest to you both.

I am Tristan's wife,
And he has swooned : I am your child, your
daughter.

Withhold not this thing from me.

HOËL (*roughly*).

There, make place,

Give way ! give way !

[*He lifts TRISTAN and carries him to the couch ; then, when he has laid him down, raised his head, and given him a cordial, he rises.*]

YSEULT (*opposing him at the foot of the couch*).

Instruct me what to do.

HOËL (*laughing*). Drag down vast carpets, cover all
the stairs,

Make ready—my command to you—make ready,
As if it were a god.

YSEULT (*astonished, gazing at the form before her*).

You mean a funeral ?

HOËL (*drawing her to him*). Make ready, child.

[*He sets her on his knee.*]

Come here. There must be changes ;
And, as you put it, in a funeral
We know the change and we prepare for it
Our pomps and our solemnities.

Child, there are other changes—
As if a ship comes freighted full of gold,

And bursts its treasure at a beggar's feet ;
Changes that cost one's wits . . .

[*His eyes streaming with tears.*

Put back this hair ;

It is better braided up ; yes, tuck it up . . .

And sweep the rooms and haul down the great
carpets . . .

Make ready so.

YSEULT. I will not stir.

HOËL. He has been singing to me, child . . . Make ready!

Do not disturb your husband. Presently

When he awakes say I have told you all :

Say you are ready and the carpets laid . . .

It is his pleasure.

YSEULT. Nay,

He told you all, my father, and his pleasure

Is that you give me burthen of the tale

From your own lips.

HOËL. Child, child !

It was not so he told it . . . It sang forth

From the spices of the sea.

[*TRISTAN cries in his sleep.*

He is calling, child ;

Listen, he mutters . . . he may tell you all.

YSEULT. He is calling me—*Yseult* ! He is calling me.

Loose, let me go !

HOËL. If you will say my words—

You must prepare,

You will be ready ; I have told you all.

[*She kneels by TRISTAN, and DUKE HOËL goes out.*

YSEULT. Tristan ! But in his sleep he called to me.
Tristan ! I answer back . . .

How strange it is
That they should be so hard on me ; my father
So hard . . . I have my secret to myself :
For if they could suspect they would be angry ;
They would not follow Tristan. Something strange
There is grown up among them : Kaherdin
Kisséd me and did not say he would return,
Or where he sailed. I weep,
I must weep for him sorer, bitterer,
Than if I mourned him dead.

*[Thrumming with her fingers on the
coverlid.]*

Tristan has travelled

Once—twice : I know not
The country he has journeyed to. He comes
Dishevelled and most wonderful, his eyes
Fresh-jewelled with fresh stones. I do not ask
What perils he has met,
Nor why he cut away his shining hair,
Nor how it is he comes back as one blasted,
Who cannot eat among us any more,
Nor laugh among us, nor take rest . . .
I do not ask
That he should play the harp, I feel he cannot ;
And yet he must—for now
There is between us nothing but a name,
Unless we have our marriage in his music ;
For I can lay my head

Against his harp, I can caress his harp,
And he caresses back.

[*Leaning against the golden harp.*

For just this song
In the bosom of the harp I understand,
As if it were the cooing of a child.

[*Wringing her hands.*

I shall not bear a child,
Nor yet, nor ever, for before the year
Of his vow is ended Tristan will be dead.
What is it so forbidden in our nuptials?
I ask myself—I do not ask my father,
I do not ask my brother;
For if I heard the answer from my father,
Or from my brother . . .

It is best to hear

Nothing, but in the way his harp can tell;
To be the little, dark Yseult he loves.

TRISTAN (*opening his eyes*). Yseult!

YSEULT. You have waked soon, my dear—but I am
ready,
And all is at your pleasure.

You have called me . . .

Shall I not dress your wound? You call so
softly . . .

And yet such pain . . .

[*As TRISTAN rises and moans.*

Tristan, he told me all . . .

Now let me dress your wound . . . Not that?
Then say

What you would have me do? I am all patience.

[TRISTAN *stretches his hand out wearily toward the harp.*

Your harp! Ah, then indeed you will make ready,

Will you not, Tristan? I shall learn the burthen Of a new song! I give you all your pleasure!

[*He plays a sad air.*

But these are ancient notes—and nothing new To startle me! Love's music!

[*She stoops to kiss TRISTAN, who is touching his harp again and again, his face turned from her.*

TRISTAN (*suddenly turning his face*). Little, dark Yseult, you curse me—but I loved your love, Answering your name . . . Yseult.

Re-enter DUKE HOËL

HOËL. There! She will have you healed by blackest arts—

Ho, ho! by blackest arts; and she will suffer That a great Queen shall sit beside your couch— As well she knows wise women may be found Tutored by nature; and there is no cause For jealousy, her father Being well-content.

(*To YSEULT.*) Your brother in his ship Is bearing home this Wizard-Queen to Carhaix, For once she healed our Tristan of his hurt,

A venomed hurt. Your hands,
These fair, white hands cannot draw forth the sting
Of fatal poison . . . Girl, you have a husband
Of tender nurture, one who grieves for you,
Who grieves to put you from your nurse's place,
Who loves you and besought of me, your father. . . .
YSEULT (*to* TRISTAN). A nurse for you, a wizard-
herbalist,

A Queen !

Tristan, I kiss you pardon. And you feared
To grieve me. . . .

TRISTAN (*smiling*.) All the way of love is grief.
. . . Her chamber

Be in the Tower that looks forth to the west.
Can you not make it ready ?

YSEULT. I shall meet her ;
Beloved, I am the hostess to your Queen ;
And she shall dress your wound. Then I shall
come

To watch again, to soothe you at your pillow,
While our wise, royal guest shall pass to banquet,
My brother humbly waiting on her.

TRISTAN. Father,

You have deceived me. She must understand—

HOEL. She will, when you are healed from death.

Go, child,

You shall make ready ; as you are my child,
Shall be a hostess and not bring me shame.
Prepare the lodging as your husband bids
For the great stranger lady—

TRISTAN (*standing by his harp and flashing with light*).

For Yseult,

My life, my death—the sole song of my harp,

Yseult of Ireland, my one heritage—

There is one Tristan, there is one Yseult.

[YSEULT OF BRITTANY *rises from the couch, where she has been sitting, and clutches her black plaits in either hand.*

She is fair-haired, Yseult of the White Hands ;

She loves me, never has she broken faith.

There is one Tristan, there is one Yseult.

[YSEULT OF BRITTANY *goes up to TRISTAN'S harp, gathers some of the wires in her hand and wrenches them from their pegs. TRISTAN breaks into mournful laughter.*

HOËL. Come, child, away !

[*She faces TRISTAN'S laughter a moment ; her eyes blank, the wires of the harp in her fingers. Then, with a cry, she goes out, followed by DUKE HOËL.*

TRISTAN.

Now she has stabbed Yseult,

There is no more Tintagel—

And the great fairy-castle blown to earth !

The rock, the height, the sunset—it is gone :

Nor is there anything to happen more.

My harp is dead, and all blown down. The harp—

[*His hand passing over it falls through a hollow.*

The power to call her through the world
And all its quarters gone. My harp—a chasm !

*[In white shining a golden sail streams
across the far sea, high above.]*

A wide-wrenched throat—no voice,
Nor any power to call . . . The harp !
She never loved it ; she has laughed at me
For a harper ; but she did not laugh at me
For a fool ; she loved me with the bells . . .
But it is still now, and I must be dying—
For what remains, what can remain . . . The fool !
Love's fool !—She loved me with the bells, that
music

Chimed well . . . Soft, it is coming . . .

[He listens.]

As a magic suit of armour to my wars,
As a vision of a shield—a sound of bells
Borne to me !

A slow boom of sound
Thickens the air . . . A passing-bell !
And I will count the years.

[The bell strikes thirty and then stops.]

A passing-bell !

God's patience with my soul !

*[Slowly a new sound intrudes as of a
muffled sob : it grows. TRISTAN rises
vehemently.]*

I cannot listen,
I cannot bear to hear. I know our ears
Are given, I know my ears

Are given for the voices of my hands
Upon the harp : all other sounds
Whelm me as tides advancing to o'erwhelm.
They are all come to drown me, all these sounds,
They are nothing but pursuit—they are dogging
me.

This is a master-fiend—

It clutches, bumps . . . Ho ! it is in the roof,
It is overhead . . . Why are you here?—This
sound ? *[His wife comes close to him.*

YSEULT OF BRITTANY (*with flaming eyes*). A great
bell, and it sounds out far to sea.

TRISTAN. You are hating me.

YSEULT. It is a Christian bell.

TRISTAN. You are hating me.

YSEULT (*with a passionate gesture*). Give up your soul
to God.

I love you, Tristan !

Tristan, I love you, I would save your soul.

I love you—not a fiend dare brave us now,

Not if you listen, while I pray. I love you . . .

Then drink the holy drops . . . these from the
chapel !

I sprinkle, scatter the dews over him—

There ! While I pray. . . .

[TRISTAN has sunk back on the couch.

YSEULT OF BRITTANY *kneels by the bed,*
snatches his hand and kisses her prayers
on it. Gradually a long trill of laughter
crosses the dirge. TRISTAN starts up.

TRISTAN. I hear a laugh . . . I cannot see ! Laugh
on,

Laugh close—I cannot hear ! . . .

But I can hear a voice . . . It is her voice.

She is laughing at the bells—she hears the
bells . . .

Remain—behold !

*[He clutches YSEULT'S hands and keeps
them locked in his.]*

A VOICE. Bells, bells ! The fool's bells, are they
jangling still ?

My fool, my fool !

And do you ring, so solemn
Because a fool is dead ? Give place !

*[He looses YSEULT'S hands and pushes
her from him.]*

My fool, my fool !

Where shall I find him ?

*[A mystic company enters, as if blown
along on flame : in front QUEEN
YSEULT and BRANGAENA.]*

QUEEN YSEULT (*imperiously to the other YSEULT*).

Stop the bells !

Let there be peace. I come to fetch him—
go !

Stop the bells—and return !

Give me a cup . . .

*[YSEULT OF BRITTANY rises and goes
out.]*

We are athirst !

How lank this hair, how dim
These soiled, wet eyes ! Not blind ? . . . Brangaena, give us

The very cup—from the bottom of the sea,

Washed up to me in the hollows of the calm !

We are not mocked . . .

Now, see ! Then feel it, Tristan—
Stuck round with barnacles ! . . . Love, is it harsh

To these dear fingers ? They must wreathe it round.

[TRISTAN'S *nostrils expand*.

Now smell !—It is the very cup. Brangaena
Came with it in her hands—she has atoned ;
She is our cupbearer—ha, ha ! for ever !
Not you—be gone !

[*She breathes on YSEULT of the White Hands, who enters, trembling, with a cup . . . YSEULT creeps away. Then QUEEN YSEULT turns to DUKE HOËL, who has advanced with wine.*

Yes, any wine on earth
You may pour into it—that is no matter—
I have sucked brine from it, and all its odours
And all its herbs translated. See, Beloved,

Not yet . . . You must not drink it—
by-and-by

There will be no more patience and no
room

For memory . . . Look at the cup! . . . A
perfume

Breaks from its sides as ambergris; smell,
smell!

We are not mocked . . . How free we are to
talk

To one another!

TRISTAN (*shuddering*). Did you drag it up?

Will you not sign the Cross. I am afraid.

YSEULT. Fool, fool to the last! Brangaena fished
it up,

And with a mortal hook.

[*She laughs low, caressing him.*

Fool, I am with you,

And on your errand! Do you know our
bourne

When we have drunk this potion?

TRISTAN.

O my Death,

But you are gripping me in tighter bonds

Than any I have known.

YSEULT.

How dear to find you

So mortal and so timid! Must I snatch
you?

Will you not drink?

TRISTAN (*stammering*). God's love. . . .

[*Again YSEULT laughs.*

YSEULT. I am come to fetch you,
Tristan, to me—it is your Hell or Heaven.

[She drinks. His hand fastens on the cup, and he drinks too, then falls back. The mystic company has faded. TRISTAN lies dead. A solemn chanting is heard : KAHERDIN and his sailors enter with the dead body of QUEEN YSEULT. She is laid beside TRISTAN. There is a sound of magic music in the profound silence of the room round the dead lovers.]

A MESSIAH

Yes, a Messiah—and the tragedy of those who from among the Called deem themselves the Chosen. And how, in the midst of high endeavour, they creep on into hypocrisy and tortured pride !

‘Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot
Unlikely wonders.’

PERSONS

SABBATAÏ ZEVI, the Turkish Messiah.

MOHAMMED VI., the Soldan.

AHMED COPRILI, the Grand Vizir.

THE MUFTI VANNI, Head of the Mosque of St. Sophia.

MUSTAPHA PASHA, Deputy-Vizir or Kaimacon.

CHELIBI SARAPH-BASHI, Jewish Master of the Mint at Smyrna.

NEHEMIAH COHEN, a Claimant of Messiahship.

NATHAN BENJAMIN OF GAZA, the Prophet of Sabbataï.

SAMUEL PRIMO, the Secretary of Sabbataï.

NACHMONIDES, a Jewish Physician.

ELIAS ZEVI,

JOSEPH ZEVI,

ISAAC SILVERA,

MOKIAH GASPAR AND OTHERS,

} Jewish followers of Sabbataï
made kings by him.

ABRAHAM RUBIO, a beggar from the Morea.

SEID, the Turkish jailer of Sabbataï.

ZARAH, the wife of Sabbataï.

*Rabbis, People of Smyrna, Spahis and their Captains,
Custom-house Officers, Women and Maidens, Mariners,
Eunuchs, Ambassadors.*

SCENE

ACTS I. and II., at Smyrna.

ACT III., at Constantinople.

TIME

A.D. 1648 onwards.

A MESSIAH

ACT I

SCENE I

A silent wintry night on the seashore of Smyrna ; at the back the dark flow of the sea. RABBIS stand together in their dark turbans ; at a little distance ABRAHAM RUBIO squats on the sand.

RABBIS (*speaking among themselves*).

The sea is cold.

The sea is very cold.

The sea is starry.

Like wounds upon the sea are the large stars.

RUBIO. And our young Rabbi is down in the winter-sea—cold as death ; if this bath is purification, Abraham Rubio will be unclean till the day of the promise. How Sabbataï must shiver !

RABBIS (*among themselves*).

Hush, hush, the stars are shivering as they shine,

Hush, we are shivering.

It is very cold.

It is cold, and yet the stars are gay at heart.

Do you not feel them gay, as maidens shake

On the verges of a dance, on the shores of music,
That has not touched their ears to stir their feet ?
We are waiting, and the sea and stars are waiting,
The Heavens, the Earth, the people of our God,
Who made the Heavens and Earth and chose our
tribes.

We wait—O God, how long we wait—we wait !
PRIMO. Why should ye hope this dreamy Cabalist,
This self-tormentor, with the ardent lips,
And eyes wrapped in their secrecy as clearly
As summer's crystal blueness, will arise
And make avowal he is born of God ?

RABBIS. We wait.

The sea is waiting and the stars.

We all are ready and the night grows deep.

You see him ?

Do you see the Sainted ?

Yonder,

Clean arrows of the stars shoot round a darkness
That should be he, tranquil and set with waves.

RUBIO. What a patience ! His entrails must be
cold as the belly of a corpse in its new grave :
mine starve at the thought.

PRIMO. Why should he break his silence ? Sabbataï
Is silent ever, and he will not speak.

RABBIS. He will.

The stars have told us,

The sea has told us,

The Heavens—the Earth,

Our hearts.

RUBIO. What do I do here ? The city is gone away from life into sleep. It is deaf. Minarets and cypresses are tipped with snow, the Acropolis lies under a roof of snow ; I should lie under my Syrian rug, if I were not too much of a beggar to own one. God of Israel, we are all beggars here, we are all hungry and cold ! Have mercy, have mercy—feed Thou our emptiness !

RABBIS. The sea is icier than the snow.

The stars are whiter.

He is gone from sight, he has closed himself away.

No, no, he is there again.

He moves.

He is coming. . . .

He comes up from the waters of the deep.

O everlasting Ocean !

See, he moves,

As rhythmic as a wave on toward the land,

Dripping the ocean from his head : the stars

Scatter their silver tresses round.

The stars,—

The stars are wild and rapturous.

He is coming. . . .

It is silent.

The rams' horns

Are silent so from new moon to new moon.

The thunder of the sky

Is silent thus before its instant.

God,

We will be silent, for our hearts have voice

Waiting for breath breathed on them by thy
Will !

*[They make no sound, but as SABBATAÏ
comes nearer they draw back.]*

We dare not. . . .

We must move or cry.

O terror !

God moves upon the waters. Who abides
His coming ?

On the shore he sets his feet.

The waving stars, the flame-haired Seraphim !

Beautiful is his coming ;

Bare the star-rays

About his naked form . . . the night's expansion !

Peace !

He is standing silent.

Heaven and Earth

And sea and stars and men are therefrom silent.

Oh !

[They hold their breath.]

*[SABBATAÏ seems to be drinking in power
from the universe as he stands naked
before them. At last over the shore and
city is heard one cry.]*

SABBATAÏ. J h w h !

*[There is a moment of panic as the for-
bidden name is spoken.]*

A RABBI *(in the whisper of a death-chamber)*.

Who may speak the Name but one ?

A CHORUS. Messiah !

Hail, Messiah !

Sent of God !
Born to his people !
Our Deliverance !
See, see, he stands before us.

PRIMO. He has spoken,
The stars have heard the Name and did not fall,
The sea has heard it and the sea extends
Floating and calm ; the night has heard and shines
Across its ragged cloud ; we too have heard,
And live and shout our joy—out of our joy
We see and know God's Chosen.

RABBIS. Sabbataï !
Our King, our Lord of Lords !
The true Messiah !
The King of all Kings, the Celestial Lion !
Who will redeem his people !
Who will gather
The remnant from the winds !
Our joy, our joy !
He is the true Messiah !
Sabbataï !

And without weapons he shall wage his war,
And quell the dragon with no weapon raised.

RUBIO. He will take away our reproach, he will fill
us with good things and gold will pertain to him.
Let us believe and we shall be princes.

PRIMO. We must believe, for the sky stands ; the
sea,

And stars of heaven are white as snow about him
Who has joined heaven and earth

With the four sounds of God's mysterious Name,
Uniting the Creator and His World.

We must believe ; it is not left to faith—

We have heard the Name and live, we have seen
the night,

The host of heaven, the ocean and the shore
Secure while the intolerable touched

Voiceful each mortal substance. Let us pray
To God, our God, we be of His true Kingdom,
And of Messiah's Kingdom that begins.

*[They lift their arms. From all the snowy
minarets come voices.]*

THE MUÉDDIN. God is great, there is no God but
God,

Mohammed is God's prophet.

*[SABBATAÏ, as if waking from a trance,
shivers.]*

SABBATAÏ.

It is cold.

RUBIO. Prince, your entrails must be chilled in your
belly.

The God of Jacob warm them !

PRIMO. Holy One, let us go back with praises !

We have outstripped the dawn now thou art
risen—

Our Sun that shineth. We are blest, we are saved.

*(The RABBIS fall on their faces before him,
but RUBIO lifts up to him his gabardine
and turban from under the stones of a
rock.)*

SCENE II

Smyrna. Evening.

The courtyard of CHELIBI'S house. In the midst, a fountain ; to the right, a knot of cypress-trees ; to the left, great rose-bushes ; to the back, the chief wall of the house, white and pierced irregularly with windows, a door to the left hand in the wall. To the extreme left of the courtyard, an entrance into the street stands open. The courtyard is empty.

A CHORUS of lovely Virgins enters from the archway with lamps. As they pass the fountain they pause, let fall their swinging lamps that twinkle in the water, then lift them up and advance toward the cypresses with a cry.

CHORUS. We are waiting for the Bridegroom, we are waiting,

We are waiting for his call ;

We love him—his graces,

His light on our faces,

And he loves us whatever may befall.

LILITH. He loveth me as if he loved me only,
He loveth me as his Bride.

His hands—they are clinging ;

When I answer my voice is singing :

He loveth me as he loveth none beside.

RACHEL. We are waiting for the Bridegroom, we are waiting,
And the Bridegroom hath the Bride ;
He has chosen her ; she loveth him ;
He has chosen her ; our lights are dim ;
For the beloved of the Bridegroom is the
Bride.

RUTH. We are waiting for the Bridegroom, each
handmaiden,
We are waiting for his call ;
What he biddeth we shall do it—
If we deny him aught we rue it.
His power be on us all !

EVE. We are waiting for the Bridegroom, for his
Kingdom,
For the glory of our race ;
Many people before him shall stand ;
He shall greet his Elect on his right
hand
He shall give them place.

JUDITH. We are waiting for the Bridegroom and he
rideth,
He rides as a man of war ;
He embraceth the foe at his feet ;
He rideth in victory complete,
He rideth from afar.

LILITH. But he delays his coming, but our Lord
Delays his coming. Let us leave the
cypress,

And cross you to the roses—by the arch-
way

Let us make cluster, for our Lord delays.

[LILITH leads the Maidens towards the
rose-bushes ; they form a gleaming knot
by the archway.

RUTH. Let us in all things yield perpetual praise.

[She carefully trims her lamp and sits
down low on a stone of the archway.
From the house-door servants and slaves
come forth, spreading flowers and carpets
and dragging out wine-pots. Then a
band of honourable men pace slowly
behind the fountain and draw up in a
phalanx before the cypresses. They are
followed by CHELIBI, the Master of the
Feast, SAMUEL PRIMO, and NATHAN of
Gaza, who take up their stations round
the fountain, among high purple flags
and rushes in bloom. Poor Jews begin
to enter from without, humbly inclining
to the Master of the Feast. Then an old
man approaches, receiving every mark of
honour.

CHELIBI. Rabbi-physician, a welcome. We scarcely
hoped to see Nachmonides.

NACHMONIDES. I am old and feeble ; let me sit by

your fountain to freshen my weariness. I am exceeding weak. By day and night such concourse of suffering fills my ante-chambers I can eat but one meal for day and night. I lie down, or my sick would consult a corpse; on my back I prescribe, I talk. When night falls my voice is gone from me; but many poor mortals are in the way of life and of its holiness—so God has His praise.

CHELIBI. It is regretted by many of our nation that you never converse with the healthy or with those that would have instruction of your wisdom.

NACHMONIDES. It would delight me—it would be a great joy . . .

*[A litter is borne through the archway ;
the Maidens half rise, then, perceiving
the procession is not yet, they sink down.
An old Jew follows his son on the litter.]*

OLD JEW. Lay the boy down there, he will see all. . . . Woe's me !

*[He sits his head between his knees, making
low groans.]*

CHELIBI. Nachmonides would discourse of his science—but there is too much pain ! Well, you have risen up, Nachmonides, from your couch among your sufferers to greet the Bridegroom of Israel.

NACHMONIDES. True ! I was eagerly constrained as if my youth returned ; yet I left my precincts full of people. There is a patient of mine ! Poor

boy, poor hopeless boy, he has felt the zeal ! He is come, as his physician is come. This Sabbataï is a magician.

[NACHMONIDES *raises himself up, dips a bowl in the fountain and goes over to the boy.*

Moses, the evening is hot. Let me freshen your lips. . . . For life !

OLD JEW. For a happy life ! The lad will not open his eyes.

NACHMONIDES. He opens his teeth to the water.

OLD JEW. He awaits Messiah.

NACHMONIDES. May his Rock keep him !

[*He returns to the fountain.*

CHELIBI. We are glad you are come to the Feast, our good Nachmonides.

NACHMONIDES. I am a believer in marriage, though this marriage. . . . Your Queen is not a spotless Queen, Master Secretary. She has roamed the lands . . .

NATHAN (*tossing his head*). She has roved the lands seeking him, our heart's need. It was foretold her in a dream she should wed Messiah.

PRIMO. She did not recognise Messiah in his majesty, she passed by as he was giving alms to a beggar—for the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

NACHMONIDES (*tapping PRIMO's hand*). But he should have recognised her, Master Primo ; he should have discovered the spots beneath her gay attire. We physicians have cognisance of health

and disease. He should have known this woman that she was a sinner.

RUBIO. I am the beggar my Lord gave alms to. Did I ask an alms? He knew me, he recognised I was a beggar, and he gave me . . .

NATHAN. We do not need your testimony. Hosanna to him who fills the purse-bag is your testimony.

RUBIO (*not heeding*). He knew I was a beggar and he gave me what a beggar needs—a smile. Our lady Zarah was passing, she was arrested by that smile.

NACHMONIDES. Or did she stop to win another for herself? We all know Zarah—she would pause to admire the action and then dazzle the young prophet with her eyes.

RUBIO. We all know Zarah—the beggar knows her; she is a bounteous lady, well known to the city since she landed, yet at times she has fared hard. She has been stoned and had to shrink away to the beggar's quarters. There Messiah found us.

NACHMONIDES. And there he gave her an alms?

RUBIO. He gave her what a man gives a woman; he gave her . . .

PRIMO (*coughing*). It has been foretold that Messiah shall marry a wife of whoredoms. So the Lord commanded Hosea.

NACHMONIDES. No precedents, Master Primo, no precedents for a miracle. It is the unforeseen, the undivined, the never-to-be-thought of . . .

RUBIO. Look you—this wedding is no miracle, for our pretty lady of Smyrna has her tricks; but

that Messiah should come down and say to me
' Son, give me thy heart ' (*glancing at PRIMO*) even
as it is written in the Scriptures . . .

PRIMO. You are a wine-bibber, you are a wine-bibber.
You are come here for the wine. Away with your
lewdness. You shall not profane our Courts.

*[He strikes RUBIO ; there is a hubbub ;
again the Virgins rise, startled.]*

VOICES. We will put you out of the Synagogue.

You shall not escape us.

The Messiah calls Kings.

RUBIO. He calls beggars and harlots.

A VOICE (*from the litter*). Peace, peace ! I have
heard the Bridegroom's voice—peace !

LILITH. Maidens, arise !

For he comes—the joy of our eyes !

RUBIO. I will greet him with cymbals that clash to
the skies !

I will greet his bride, with the wild, free eyes,
Zarah, Zarah, the Queen !

PRIMO. Queen of the South—this too is prophecy,
And every Scripture

Must be fulfilled, however it degrade

The prophet to fulfil it. Presently

I take my share in these indignities—

Zarah the Queen !

*[But the slight hubbub of the hostile band is
drowned by the thrilled voices of the
Virgins as they crowd to the open, vacant
archway.]*

CHORUS. We are waiting, we are waiting, for the
Bridegroom—

He loveth me as he loveth none beside !

*[They press through the archway singing—
then the whole company follows them out.
After an interval the cortège appears and
SABBATAÏ enters with ZARAH under a
canopy : they pass through the court-
yard and enter the door of the house ;
the crowd that follows remains in the
courtyard. The door is shut.]*

VOICES. He must remain with us.

He is within.

It is to see his face. . . .

Who shut the door ?

We cannot breathe without him.

A WOMAN.

Deborah,

You are breathing roses.

DEBORAH.

But he is the rose,

The rose of Sharon and the lily's budding.

A VOICE. Who shut the door ?

A MUTED CHORUS. Our hearts are sore for him ;

If he return not, our breath will fail ;

Willing we were with him to sail,

Through a storm, on a stormy sea !

[They prostrate themselves and wail.]

Our garments we rend and spread—

He leaves us ; we cannot be comforted. . . .

He leaves us, his people, for one.

He has a fair Bride, and we
We are as the sands of the sea ;
 We are as the sand.
Will he love us and understand,
Though we are as grains in his hand,
 We are one ?

Whither is he ?—the time is a thousand years.
Will he return to us and dry our tears ?
He will return ; fall back and worship him,
 Burn bright, O eyes grown dim !

*(SABBATAÏ issues with ZARAH and their
company. He meets the people with a
smile and parted lips.*

SABBATAÏ. My own belovèd, but ye are my chosen ;
This is the moment of my triumph—this !
I have heard your crying for me, my beloved,
Therefore I am your God. This is the sign !
So long I waited for the sign and knew not
If I were chosen of my God ; ye call me,
I heard you at my marriage wail for me.
The hour is come. . . . Enter my Kingdom,
 enter,
Innumerable as the stars ! I see you
As in a vision—every lifted heart
Is incense to me, as the glowing fields
Of tulips glow from heads innumerable.
I have created you
Simply as God createth the green herb.

Ye are my pleasure and my prophecy,
My Chosen ; ye shall never doubt.

Bear witness,
I have lived with you, my multitude, and loved
you,

On your many voices I have heard one speech ;
I have heard you one by one—the sign
Of knowing you is in my heart. You have fed me,
From your homes and from your harbour and from
your streets,

Buoying me up as the waves buoy a vessel,
Sustaining me. I choose you,
My lone, my sorrowful, for I am lonely ;
I choose you, O ye poor, for I am rich ;
I call you who have never heard a call,
Never suspected that God thought on you !
O aged, you must put away your age ;
O young men, you must laugh long in your
youth,

Without remembering it will pass and never
Will it pass from you. Ye are my disciples
Who love your youth and fear it not. Ye sons
Of God, ye giants, who behold how lovely
A woman is and tremble. Sons, despair not—
Deep in the sea I heard you ; at my ear
I heard you, as the music of a shell.
Ye were my music . . . I must have musicians,
They must be always with me.

Come, my dearest,
And I will make you strong. Such secrets

I heard from you. From the unfathomed sea
I heard them in my heart.

Your instruments ! . . .

For speech is growing old.

[He takes a band of rather sheepish young men apart, touches their instruments and gives instructions for a dance. Suddenly he looks up from an instrument he is tuning and sees ZARAH deserted, her Virgins listless about her.]

Belovèd, come !

Eve, Judith, Ruth, Zarah—daughters,
Daughters of Zion, on my marriage-day
Desire hath reached deliverance.

Ye remember

How Zion sigheth in captivity. . . .
But now her shroud is lifted from the garments
Of her delight ; the ashes
Bedust no more the roses of her chaplet ;
The bitter myrtles ring with chips of gold ;
For she shall sigh no more.

Virgins and youths,
Ye shall rejoice. Come, Hillel, Absalom !
No more ye dance in parted bands, together
Ye dance . . .

[He pauses in a hush of joy as the bands of youths and maidens unite in the dance.]

The rythm breaks ! . . .

O Zarah, see !

One riseth not, this cripple riseth not ;
He is left out . . .

[SABBATAÏ *runs to the boy and lifts him by his hands.*

Rise, for you must, dear lad !
How strong, how lithe !

[*He joins the boy's hands with RACHEL's ; the old father falls flat on his face.*

Now it is full—there is no dissonance.

[*He gives his hands to ZARAH.*
Zarah—your face ! How many summer days,
And lighting of the rose-light on the dawn,
Thou hast gathered for me in this moment's
face.

Thou canst not speak . . . hush, hush !

Move to the sound. [*He leads her to the dance.*

PRIMO. A miracle ! Bear witness !

Summon the Master of the Feast, go, summon
Chelibi.

A miracle ! You saw, Nachmonides ?

NACHMONIDES. I am a doctor ; this boy had not a
sound limb of his body. Sabbataï has made him
skip. Skip, Moses, skip ! This Sabbataï, this
beautiful young man, has the breath of God mov-
ing him, as in a dream, to power. It is an adorable
nature ! May the young Rabbi be Messiah in-
deed ! He shows us most continent faith toward
God, even God our Health. It rejoices me to see
his day.

NATHAN. A miracle—that is what imports us. A

miracle ! He hath done wonders as the chosen of God, foretold by the Ancient Script—En-Soph, the Son of Heaven !

NACHMONIDES. Peace, peace ! Each acclamation of the deed of faith does harm to the doer. Less absolute becomes in the Creature his frankness with God his Creator. Keep silence, as ye love Sabbataï. (*To the boy's father.*) Old man, watch your son and weep for joy.

O Nathan Ghazati, you are young ; the voice in you is not that of the white-haired whose lips are as old instruments mellow. Do not speak when the lips move ; do not speak till the heart has brooded on the voice between its wings. [*Exit.*]

NATHAN. Does he think the mumblings of age transform the world and proclaim power and empire ? Does the Son of Heaven want piping greybeards to go before him ?

Here is a miracle !

PRIMO. It shall be written to every country of the Jews' Dispersion. All shall rejoice.

[CHELIBI *advances.*]

NATHAN. Chelibi, O Saraph-Bashi, a miracle !

CHELIBI. That my house should be so honoured !

PRIMO (*catching MOSES*). This impotent boy is dancing like Hillel.

MOSES. I am dancing, dancing ; I am whole—I leap

Crag to crag, as David when he kept the sheep.

You shall not stay me.

PRIMO. But the Master's fame.

MOSES. I yield my limbs—feel them, examine, show them,

Beckon!—but surely none will leave the dance!

CHELIBI. Ah, stripling, there is nothing men will not flee from more quickly than their peculiar happiness. They will leave it for misfortune, for an accident, for any promise of a spectacle; they will leave it for the dear misery each man craves to hug to his bosom as his own; and for sake of a miracle . . . were it only to see little worms in feathers, they would cross the ocean.

NATHAN (*in a shout*). A miracle, a miracle! Come and behold!

CHELIBI. Look, look!

[The dance breaks up and a crowd gathers.]

OLD JEW (*stroking his son's feet*). I am his father,
I am proud of him.

God gave him strength to dance at the Great Feast.

PRIMO. It was Sabbataï that wrought the miracle, you fool! Sabbataï is shown forth as Messiah. I will write it to all lands. 'Then shall the lame leap as an hart'—Every Scripture fulfilled!

VOICES. A work of God!

Sabbataï is Messiah.

He heals diseases.

He will heal God's people.

A SEPHARDI. These limbs are good as my son's—

the pride of the port, when he shoulders his figs—
Valorea's.

ANOTHER. Come, let us see you caper.

*[A break in the circle discovers SABBATAÏ
and ZARAH at rest under rose-trees.]*

SABBATAÏ (*as he fans her with a great fan of feathers*).

They all desert Messiah.

ZARAH. All but Zarah—

She cannot ; she is happy as a leaf

On the stream's journey ; she is borne along.

[The dancers close round.]

*Enter a train of Ambassadors. Perplexed they pass to
the group in the centre and bow to MOSES*

AMBASSADORS. We come from many lands,

We come, gifts in our hands ;

They are gifts from our lands—all lands

Are his ; we are his bands,

And the chosen people he commands.

MOSES (*in terror*). O Kings,

I am not the Messiah.

PRIMO. From afar !

Take heed, good Smyrnites, it comes to pass,

Kings from afar !

*[The Ambassadors have been gravely un-
packing their perfumes and treasure.]*

RUBIO *staggers to the group.*

PRIMO. But where is the Messiah ?

RUBIO. Where is Messiah?—drinking, he is drunk ;
I found him by the wine-jars.

[The Ambassadors give a little start and instinctively clutch at their rich vessels.]

PRIMO. By the wine-jars,
Drunken, but not with wine, but not as Noah . . .

NATHAN. With wine of prophecy.

PRIMO (*low to NATHAN*). But how it sways—
This throne on which they have exalted him !

*[SABBATAÏ is borne forward on a throne.
He carries the great fan of feathers.
ZARAH and the Virgins follow dancing.
SABBATAÏ'S kinsfolk are round him,
acclaiming.]*

KINSFOLK. Messiah, Messiah, we bow the knee !

At the sight of him our vision swims ;

There is scent of gold about his limbs !

He is Messiah—and my cousin too !

Joseph, you drank the wine. . . . The wine is
new.

Enthroned him, he is true,

Messiah ! We smell the gold in him !

Gold as the Golden Seraphim

That covered the Ark is he,

And we are his kin and we

Shall have of his riches. See !

These gifts ; we are all of his fold.

We shall do as he biddeth us. Behold,

It is lapis lazuli !

[They set down SABBATAÏ, enthroned.]

MOSES, *fixing doubtful eyes on SABBATAÏ, hobbles back towards his litter.*

SABBATAÏ (*greeting the Ambassadors with exultation*).

Come to me, happy kings, come to me, brethren !

(*To his Kinsfolk.*) And you too shall be kings, all kings, each one.

(*To Ambassadors.*) You must be kings, you offer gifts—and these,

These must be kings, for they have greedy eyes

For incense and for gold. Good Rubio,

The Ambassadors are thirsty ; they must drink.

Lade the young slaves with goblets. And meanwhile

I will distribute gifts. I am Messiah

Simply because my gifts transcend your gifts.

I have the sky, the stars to give.

[*Glancing at the choir of Virgins.*

The pearls

Of the midmost caverns—I can see the pearls

Each crescent in its shell.

[*Restraining his Kinsfolk who are greedily handling the treasure of the Ambassadors.*

No, no ! my manners !

These, these are mine—this incense . . .

[*Rising and addressing the Ambassadors.*

Greeks, Arabians—

Far-travelled people, who in rocks and caverns

And in thick-peopled cities have had token,

As the tokens of an earthquake in your hearts,

That ye should come to me—I have been with you

In prison and in sorrow. One by one
As if you were my flock I have succoured you.
I know you, some of you most faithful, some
Most ignorant. Some are there that believe
And some believe not. . . . Yea, it is not that ;
My world, my starry multitudes, ye love me,
Ye have desired me from the ends of time.
Infinite is my love to you, the beating
Of my heart to own you all. From many lands
Ye bring me each the riches of your lands,
And the peculiar treasure . . .

*[Laying a vase of perfume beside him, after
deeply snuffing it.]*

But this perfume
Is strange to me, as perfume should be strange,
A novelty as welcome as an old,
Delicious memory. Gems, carbuncles—
These all for me, my wearing and my glory.
(*Smiling.*) No crown that I shall ever give away,
Or weary of, or lose. Unguents and herbs !
Where is Nachmonides ?

*[PRIMO hastily approaches SABBATAÏ and
whispers.]*

PRIMO (*withdrawing*). Balms, lusty bundles
That carry life.

SABBATAÏ. I cannot use them—healing
Is with me ; I am Health. And here is gold !

[He shivers before a great block of gold.]

RUBIO. Master, they will think you drunk if you
stare so excessively.

SABBATAÏ. More wine, good Rubio—

More wine ! Remove that block. Idolaters,
That is the golden calf and it will crush you
To atoms if you fall and worship it.
Now for my gifts ! Elias Zevi, you,
First of my brethren, I name King of Kings ;
You, Joseph Zevi . . . it has slipped my brain
What you inherit . . .

[The Ambassadors are now deeply drinking.]

King of Judah's King !

And Isaac Silvera . . .

[Putting his hand to his brow.]

Ah, now it is all plain ; in thee
I find the Soul of David and thy Kingdom
Is therefore Persia. England I appoint
To thee, Mokiah Gaspar, for no reason
But that thou art an ass—inspired
By stubbornness to thwart men from their doom.
It must be that . . . the rest is in a vision
Of eagles and their young.

NATHAN. He prophesies !

All ears ! Attention ! It is prophecy
When animals grow wings—Leviathan
Wrinkles the waves and the ox turns himself
Slowly as if revolving on a wheel.

[He strains to hear more.]

SABBATAÏ. To Chelibi,

My well-beloved King Joash, Egypt, Egypt,
With Nile in perpetuity. For Nathan
Red-sanded Barbary.

NATHAN (*prostrating himself*). Malka Kadisha, hail,
Most holy King, Messiah !

SABBATAÏ. Jeroboam—
There is no place ; it is the Vizirs now ;
Smaller they get and smaller, till the last
Is of no size at all ; but every king
Shall have a Vizir. . . . You are all content ?

RUBIO. I am not content, Master ; I am your beggar
and you have given me nothing.

[SABBATAÏ *rises from his throne, gapes and
lays a hand on RUBIO's shoulder.*

SABBATAÏ. For you the whole
Of Lebanon, this Smyrna . . . Turkey. All
The earth I will apportion. . . . But the people !
They too must have a kingdom—Paradise,
The Heaven, my kingdom. Lo,
This fan . . . I waft it ! Moses—ah, no rod !
A miracle of laughter—
Pure laughter to you all, pure divination !
Touch it, my people—the least waft
Of its feathers on your cheek and ye are saved.
Saved ! The long faces widen into smiles. . . .
Grave Rabbis, ye shall leap. My kingdom
Is come when ye shall tuck the scrolls of Law
Under your arms and dance. The synagogues
Must skip as the little hills.

My fan, my fan !

Old men, this fairy touch
To thrill your wrinkles ! Mothers, no more care ;
Your sons are glorious, and I am your son—

To each of you Messiah. Virgins, Virgins,
The butterflies light thus! . . . Saved, saved,
Rebecca!

Hillel . . . ha, ha! . . . and Primo . . .

[There is a solemn, smiling tumult as the people sway up to the fan tipped toward them. Meanwhile the kings have fallen into violent quarrelling; in their heat they strike and hustle each other. One precious jar of ointment is shattered. The Ambassadors anxiously collect their treasure, protecting their offerings with their arms. Weary at last, SABBATAÏ turns to his empty throne; the long fan droops restlessly as he stands on the steps, struck by the sight of ZARAH.]

My beloved,

My kingdom! You are speechless as a rose.

How I can deck you!

Your eyes are set as jewels on this fabric.

How I can deck you!

[He holds out his hands to the Ambassadors who fill them with necklets and amulets.]

The mines are shaking to unearth their gems,

And Araby and India. I groan!

I am a god, and a god must not worship.

[He slowly decks ZARAH with pearl-ropes and with earrings, sighing.]

But yet this perfect stillness; as a star

Drops in the lake this pearl is on your bosom.

I am now as I rose up from the sea,
And had no voice. . . . Wondering, I reached my
kingdom.

(Turning to the Ambassadors.) This is my Bride.
She is prepared, adorned.

It is to me as she came down from heaven,

It is to me a miracle. Behold her !

This is the very city of our God—

The secret that I whisper . . . this is Zion.

(To NATHAN and PRIMO.) Softly . . . bring hither
my disciples. . . . Fair !

How fair—my dove of the rocks' clefts !

Secret to me . . . but manifest to these.

*[In the growing dusk the band of young
disciples is faintly seen ; recognisable,
SABBATAÏ stands apart as before a
vision.]*

ACT II

SCENE I

*The seashore beyond Smyrna. On the stony coast
oleanders press their bloom together. It is dawn.
A tall, winged, glancing figure is pacing the edges
of the waves beside SABBATAÏ.*

SABBATAÏ (*stopping ; then turning to front the figure*).

Who art thou ?

THE FIGURE. Gabriel.

SABBATAÏ. Oh, then, thou bringest tidings of my
God :

Thou art ever in His presence.

THE FIGURE. Thou art closer

To Him than I. He feeds thee from His fountains.

SABBATAÏ. From the most secret places of the rocks

With the water that sprang forth at Moses' stroke.

Angel, I cannot show the world this fountain ;

It makes green, silent pastures in my heart,

The song that beamed through David's blood, the
springtide

That blossoms through these withies as a rose.

I have no speech—I am where silence is—

I never have revealed myself, except
By rising from the sea, as the sun rises
Apparent on his journey with no sound.
I have no voice. . . . Can there be voices, angel,
For anything we feel, our sleep, our waking,
The changes in us when we love, we die ?
I have no tongue—

My hour is secret . . . and the world athirst.

THE FIGURE. Speak, O Messiah, what is in your
heart !

This perfect morning God would have you choose,
Taking no counsel, your devoted path,
As birds raise up their wings.

SABBATAÏ. If He had told me !
What need, O Gabriel, you should leave His throne
If this had welled up in me ?

THE FIGURE. It has welled—

That thou shouldst sail in a Saic barque,
Garnished with gold that men may mark ;
Shouldst sail away to the Soldan's land,
And to sound of shawms take in thy hand
The crown of the world from the Soldan's head,
Thyself being crowned and no blood shed,
No crying from those that are slaughtered,
And no silence from those that are dead.
Atone, that for thy tarrying and thy doubt
I left God's presence.

SABBATAÏ. Hie thee to the Throne.

My dream is given me. I will go alone
To the sound of music——

THE FIGURE.

No, Messiah, thou

Must lead the people to thy music now.

Call the Musicians—

Call the Mariners . . .

*[The Figure vanishes.]*SABBATAÏ (*extending his arm toward the sea*). God,

thou hast sent thy Angel Gabriel

To quicken me : Thou grievest me in this.

Thou sendest forth thy messengers to men

To warn them or forbid : to thine elect

Thou art as the sparkle in the diamond,

That has no entrance . . .

[NACHMONIDES, in his black cloak and turban, comes along the shore with feeble steps. SABBATAÏ meets him.]

Ah, Nachmonides !

I could embrace these towers of rose.

[Pointing to the shrubs.]

What breath

Of roses and death and nard !—I have my dream.

NACHMONIDES. Rabbi, we have seen your faith :
what is your dream ?

SABBATAÏ. Messiah's dream—to live the prophecies.

NACHMONIDES. Messiah is the whole of the prophecies. Think not of fulfilment if indeed you are chosen. Rabbi, do not tempt God. Prophecies come unto men—the cranes fly back to announce the spring, but spring appears when the hour is come. What joy of face you have ! Can prophecies awake such dominion ?

SABBATAÏ. The prophecy of Nathan—

That I shall take the world with harmony
From all the instruments of string and vent,
Issuing their deep compulsion ; that the Soldan
Shall let my hands discrown him, as the year,
With horns, with blaring trumpet, abdicates
To the new year of time. I sail, Nachmonides.
God bids me sail—sail with dispassioned music—
Then lead the Soldan captive to the river
Sabbation, then lead my people homeward
To Holy Land. . . . It is the prophecy.

NACHMONIDES. But where are the words of the antique prophets ? Is there in Torah the naming of your river Sabbation ? Elijah, Isaiah ! What have they to do with the Soldan Mohammed ? What with Nathan Ghazati ?

SABBATAÏ. The Kabbala, Nachmonides, to me
Is more profoundly open than to any,
Even than to Chayim Vital : it foretells
The triumph of the Holy King, my triumph.
You are a Talmudist—your eyes are blind.

NACHMONIDES. Ah, Rabbi—that book of destruction,
that nurse of falsehood, your Kabbala—would
you had never unrolled it !

SABBATAÏ. Never without the treasures of its sea
Had I been called and given the voice of God !
Why take my spirit from me, unbeliever ?
Why come on gladness as deficiency ?
Go to your sick ! Farewell, Nachmonides.

NACHMONIDES. God's blessing preserve you, Rabbi !

Nachmonides may be a vain babbler till he lie down among his patients ; but, stretched on his back, he would praise you as full of life, yet warn you as nourishing death—to his subtle eyesight even at this moment unconcealed—he would instruct of the remedies, as thus : to stay in Smyrna, to put a foot on no vessel for any port ; to burn your Kabbala with flame of fire, and let the light within you shine out as a pharos.

SABBATAÏ. God's angel has been with me out of heaven :

As from God's lips I am breathed on for this sailing.

The stress of Gabriel's pinion bore my doom.

NACHMONIDES. I would I were laid on my back ; but behold, I am standing on feeble legs—and Messiah needs no physician. Well, Rabbi, God be with you !

SCENE II

Smyrna.

Outside CHELIBI'S house. To the left the last column of the portico stands out against sea and sky from the wall of the house itself that makes an angle. In the thickness of this wall a narrow door is just seen. A table stands in the shade of the house. From the column toward the right, a low marble wall with a marble seat along it runs in

front of the sea till it is suddenly broken by a gap through which steps descend to the port. The wall is continued to the extreme right, where the topmost sails of a vessel rise, half furled and golden, from the water below. SABBATAÏ lies along the seat under the column, lazing with the sea. In the court, under the further portion of the marble wall a group of children is in the midst of a game. One of the children steals up.

CHILD. Play with us, lord. You are dull, left alone.
Play with us !

SABBATAÏ. Shall I be your king ?

CHILD. If you will watch us running races—

If you will give us crowns . . .

SABBATAÏ. You choose—?

[The children gather round him and speak in chorus.

CHILDREN. We choose you for our king,

We choose you !

We will bring you in our hands

The little tortoise for caressing,

And to receive your blessing.

We will take you by the hand

To see where the tall swans stand.

Have you guessed

Where is their nest ?

We will draw you into our own land.

You shall watch with us where blue larks in the
sky

Cease to sing ;
We will leave you—and by-and-by
Rush down on you with a cry.
It shall rock in the palace as if the stones should
cry,
For you are our king,
We choose you,
And we love you best :
You shall play with us for ever,
We will not loose you,
We love you best.

SABBATAÏ (*caressing the children*). Fetch me the little
tortoise—Chayim, you !
It shall receive my blessing.

[*The lad runs off.*

Zeuna, keep

For me the secret where the swan has built
Her nest. . . . Come hither, little ones !

[*He feeds them with Turkish Delight.*

What chicks . . . what little, lusting mouths,
Smeared with the sweet, and happy. . . . More,
but more !

[NATHAN GHAZATI *enters with the Kings*
ISAAC SILVERA and MOKIAH GASPAR,
who retire sullenly to the seat above the
vessel, while NATHAN stands before
SABBATAÏ. The children play a little
with SABBATAÏ's fingers and fringes—
then shyly creep away.

NATHAN. Master, what has not been revealed to

these babes, has been revealed to me. You must start this day. The Children of the Promise must be led to their Kingdom. Lo, the Lion of Judah in a light skiff, sets sail in my vision : the sea is wide, 'mid the aura from the sea a moon in its last quarter and crowned above its crescent is sinking for ever. The waves of the wide sea are churned by the vessel. You must start to-day.

SABBATAÏ (*drawing NATHAN down beside him*).

Your eyes are full of spotted fire, my Nathan !

How can I start till the false prophet come

I have commanded to my royal presence ?

Your vision signs not of to-day—to-morrow

I sail, nor leave an enemy behind,

Even with a dream in front.

How fresh the waves !

How fresh they curl along, how exquisite

This waiting is—as when a rose-tree waits

The breath and the disparting of the rose !

Do not the waves fold over, fold aside

To whisper one another of this voyage ?

What buoyancy is in them, a delight

As buoyant to my limbs as they would bear
me

Without a ship to haven . . .

[*He turns, taking a fresh position as he
picks little stones from the wall.*]

Exquisite

This waiting, this delay ! No more to do

Than the children playing yonder. Though the
city

Be thronged and bustling and the people mad,

No matter ! Infinite in blue

The dawning, infinite the eve in light.

[NATHAN rises impatiently as PRIMO
enters from the house with two
Poles.

PRIMO. These worthy men, Isaiah Levi and Leb
Hertz . . .

SABBATAÏ (*embracing them*). But we remember. . . .

Welcome, brethren, welcome !

Are you not sent by Nehemiah Cohen ?

Does he obey our mandate ?

1ST POLE. We are his heralds. He accepts with
delight your invitation. He would see you, for
we have described to him your glory ; we re-
counted to him the miracle.

SABBATAÏ. What miracle ?

2ND POLE. The marvellous help you afforded the
Jews of Jerusalem, paying the full impost out of
Egypt as from your own purse.

SABBATAÏ (*smiling*). You are believers ?

1ST POLE. We would be believers in the true Messiah.
We would hear. Nehemiah is very learned in
dispute—he is solid.

[PRIMO is summoned within.

SABBATAÏ (*clouding*). We will set his doubts at rest.
He shall be our forerunner, our herald—not our
enemy.

(*To the Kings* ISAAC SILVERA and MOKIAH GASPAR).
Accompany these strangers to my ship. There is
the miracle! [Exeunt.

NATHAN (*hiding his face on the wall*). O Master, you
are my despair! On me the burthen! I curse
you as I should curse the child unravelling a
drag-net for the waters. Rabbi, you will ruin me
in your ruin. All your Kings are in revolt.

SABBATAÏ (*stroking NATHAN'S head*). I do not love
my Kings, my black-haired, my beloved.

NATHAN. If you loved me—if you knew. . . .
Master, for two hours I have been soothing the
Kings, I have been describing to them their
dominions that you might not be tortured. All
I can say to them now but incites them. Your
mariners curse you on the beach.

SABBATAÏ. Nathan has cursed me.

NATHAN. I have cursed your mariners! I tell you
there is treason in the port. The city is weary of
you; you are a fly sticking in its honey. These
sleek Poles to whom you are so soft, speak of
another Messiah, who comes with the keen lips of
a sword. . . . Master, we are a downtrodden
people: we may not walk the streets save in the
badge of our shame, we may not deck our wives,
we may not make beautiful our houses or lift our
voices from their roofs in psalmody. Are you not
a Jew? But you do not feel the deep rancour
in your heart. You make terms with the English
merchants—they approve you as honest. You

make terms, you palter. you are inexorable. When Messiah comes he will strike upward as with a people from underground . . .

[CHELIBI *approaches*.

SABBATAÏ. I am being chidden, Chelibi.

CHELIBI. Our good prophet is impatient, but his impatience is honourable. Your train is very burdensome to Smyrna. Kings without kingdoms are a very troublesome kind of kings—they make subjects of every honest citizen. They sweep up tribute, and the traffic of the bazaars is stopped. Our little Smyrna is incommoded; and to speak truth, there is nothing so incommodious as a project. I would have you leave, dear Rabbi, before the Cadi and his Turkish officers force you to leave us. Be advised.

SABBATAÏ. Chelibi, Nehemiah is at our gates; you are hospitable. Did you not provide my marriage-feast? Nehemiah has travelled very far at my bidding. Go within, prepare the table for my foe.

[*Exit CHELIBI within.*

[SABBATAÏ *turns dreamily to the sea and whistles—then turns to NATHAN.*

If this should be Messiah—Ephraim Messiah, the forerunner! I shall know when I see him! I shall know if he is beloved of God. He says I have had no forerunner—that is true . . .

NATHAN (*shaking his fist at SABBATAÏ*). You have called me your Elijah, you have said. . . . But I will defeat this Nehemiah, I will defeat his wiles.

There cannot be two forerunners, two Elijahs, two Ephraim-Messiahs. I will make merry with this squat-faced German. I will make him foolish in your presence.

SABBATAÏ. Dear Nathan, if he hate me, I shall laugh at him. I do not laugh at my lovers. It is serious if any man love me ; and he becomes of account at once.

(*To PRIMO who approaches bowing very low*).

No, Primo, I will not see the Rabbis from Jerusalem—

No, nor the deputation from Cairo—

No, nor the inquirers from Pesth—

No, nor the meddlesome flatterers from Spain,
I will not see them. Leave me !

PRIMO (*bowing more low*). Master, it is I, your anxious secretary and your devoted servant—I present myself humbly to remind you that it is the year of millennium, that the year has dawned.

NATHAN. It is the year of millennium . . .

SABBATAÏ. Then it is millennium as harvest-time is harvest. . . . Let me be at peace.

[PRIMO goes back three steps, then turns.

PRIMO. Master, I have told your mariners it is the year of the millennium, and they aver the wind is most favourable—a choice wind, but a temporary . . .

SABBATAÏ. The wind is too favourable, I would start in a western gale.

PRIMO stands.

PRIMO. An officer from the Cadi awaits your leisure.
SABBATAÏ. Leisure—but is not a god all leisure?

Is not a god always at his ease? You suppose him all ear!—meanwhile he conducts his car through the heavens.

PRIMO (*more stolidly*). The Cadi demands that in three days you set sail.

SABBATAÏ. Would he break the poise of the millennium with a threat? Send away these malcontents, tell them all things are possible with God. Send them away—let them broider banners, let them broider banners with the word Millennium writ large.

PRIMO. And the believers . . .

SABBATAÏ. The believers are maddening me! But my ship! I will go down to the quay. They have brought her round.

PRIMO. Nehemiah?

[Shaking himself free, SABBATAÏ descends the steps. The lad CHAYIM, with a tortoise in his arms, looks round the square, catches sight of SABBATAÏ and runs after him.]

NATHAN. So God eludes us! And I stretched forth my arms to him.

PRIMO. He should prepare—he should turn to the Kabbala, the Talmud, all the Holy Books; this German comes to prove him vain by texts and long disputations. But I forget! He is Messiah and furnished of God. I must satisfy the officer,

I must satisfy the deputations, as if I had bread to give them.

[RUBIO *slides up with a bag of money and a crate of Syrian apples. He lays them down and offers an apple to PRIMO.*

RUBIO. A fruit !

PRIMO. Put it down ; these are offerings to God.

RUBIO (*chewing*). The Master does not eat.

PRIMO. And this sack of treasure ?

RUBIO. That too is an offering.

PRIMO. O beggar Rubio, and the Master does not prize it !

RUBIO. That is the Master's weakness. Treasure is treasure. The Lord God hid his treasure in the bowels of the earth ; we touch his secret when we discover gold.

PRIMO. No, Rubio, God's secret is his Messiah.

RUBIO. The Messiah is the key that unlocks His secret.

PRIMO. You have no sign—save the sign of the prophet Jonah, the whale—the infinite capacity of swallowing.

RUBIO. Who, then, is the wonder-worker—Jonah or the whale ?

PRIMO. Answer as you will after your kind. But treasure is treasure—there you have said the word.

[*Exit, snatching the sack.*

[RUBIO *advances to NATHAN, his hands open.*

NATHAN. Still at your old occupation ?

RUBIO. Still at my old occupation ! No treasure for me ! Give me my kingdom, give me Turkey—Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia, they are both mine, and I have refused a thousand pounds for each.

NATHAN. A fool and his kingdoms ! Peace, beggar !

RUBIO. If nothing is to alter . . . and I hear there is much disputing whether the Master even has power to sweep away the great Fast-day—it has set up a party against him and men grumble—if we are to suffer in our stomachs and for our sins, well . . .

[ZARAH is come out of the house in royal apparel.

Let us serve the Queen, the Queen of Pleasure, who moves among men with no denial on her lips ! Let me have alms of the Queen !

[He holds up his hands to her.

ZARAH. Rubio, dear Rubio—what were you saying—there is disaffection in the city ?

NATHAN. They say Sabbataï is no Messiah—there must be a forerunner, the light of the morning-star must shine before the morning. Nehemiah proclaims himself this forerunner. He does not know I am Elijah, grown young to proclaim the Anointed King to all the Kings of the world and to all the peoples.

ZARAH. Nathan, you are that prophet ; but Nehemiah is the forerunner of Sabbataï—the poor and humble Messiah who comes to make ready the

great advent. He is the forerunner ; we appoint him that.

NATHAN. Ah—guile of a woman ! we shall appoint him that. We shall give him the title.

RUBIO. Have you noticed he makes the Master uneasy ?

ZARAH. O Rubio, yes. Sabbataï is of so meek a spirit he doubts if he is chosen. And to doubt if one is chosen. . . . If he were confident as I ! Rubio, in the cloister, when I was but a little stubborn thing of six, I said to the nuns, ‘ I am the bride of God.’ When our Lord rose from the sea he had no higher exaltation. One can adventure all things, if it is firm in one’s heart like that.

[NEHEMIAH COHEN *and his attendants approach across the court, travel-stained.*

NATHAN. Peace, Nehemiah !

[ZARAH *lifts the golden cymbals that hang from her girdle.*

ZARAH. I acclaim you !

I have acclaimed you long. O grief
That you delayed ! You are put high among
The prophets : Nehemiah, you are strong ;
We are waiting for your voice, there is a song
So soft we cannot hear it, till among
The waters of the valley. Come, O Chief,
Make straight the pathway for the world’s belief—
Prepare men on the earth for Paradise.

NEHEMIAH.

Lady, I am

The Lord's forerunner ; rightly you rejoice ;
I am the Lord's forerunner, and to death
Will serve and follow him. When I shall see him,
I shall determine if your lord is he.

[*Looking round keenly.*

Let him be summoned . . . for he is not here.

NATHAN. But you cannot judge, you cannot determine. It is for our Lord to judge you and to appoint you !

NEHEMIAH. I am not here to take favour of your Master ; I am here to put your Master to the test.

[*ZARAH has retired, but now advances with a little dish of grapes and wine—a slave follows with basin, ewer and towels.*

ZARAH. You are weary ; eat, refresh yourself. We must abide our Lord's pleasure. He will return when he will. Meanwhile, you must refresh yourself. (*To attendants.*) Bring water !

NEHEMIAH (*unnerved*). Not you . . . the slaves !

ZARAH. I am his Queen and you are a guest long-honoured, long-expected, long-foretold, long-awaited for ! (*Pouring water on his feet.*) He bade me honour and give you comfort. You have travelled far !

NEHEMIAH. This lady is his wife ?

ZARAH (*laughing*). Oh, if a prophet—
Can you not instantly discern, and would
One whom he did not honour as his spouse
Stoop thus, thus condescend ?

NEHEMIAH. You are beautiful

And gracious—and there women have an end.

My thanks . . . and pass within.

ZARAH. But you will eat ;
But you are weary, and I am your hostess.
Speak to me of your journey.

NEHEMIAH. If your lord
Be true Messiah I abide your servant ;
If not . . .

ZARAH. What faith
You have, what knowledge ! You will be his
servant
On the instant when you see him. You were mine
On the instant when you saw me.

*[She offers him grapes one by one, checking
him with the fruit when he strives to speak.]*

NATHAN. Dare you question,
Dare you deny our holy Lord ?

NEHEMIAH (*roughly and vehemently rising*). Deny him !
I find him not in Torah nor in Talmud.

NATHAN. Nor in the Sacred Kabbala ?

NEHEMIAH. The law
And prophets being dumb, your Kabbala
Is rhapsody——

NATHAN. Cristallomantia never
Showed clearer what should be to the purged eyes.

*[SABBATAÏ has entered, climbing listlessly
up in front of the Poles. Suddenly he
rushes towards NEHEMIAH, catches him
by the shoulders, drinks in his nature
with one grip of scrutiny—and then
flings him away, laughing long.]*

SABBATAÏ. No, this is not Messiah—feel him, feel him !

He has too hard a skin. No, he is clay,
And earnestness and truth and reason—all
You are acquainted with, all that you suffered.
He is not chosen—see ! Heaven loves the vine
And leads its tendrils garlanding ; Heaven feeds
With butter and with honey—delicate
Is Heaven's nurture. But this saviour reeks,
His breath is stinking—he revolts . . . uncleanly
And vile his garments.

NEHEMIAH. Do you spit on me ?

The scroll, the scroll !

. . . It is affirmed that there is prophecy—

A secret prophecy that names your name.

If that is proved, then you are no impostor.

Show me the parchment. If it smell too old—

SABBATAÏ. Then were the parchment false ?

NEHEMIAH. No, you are false,

And no Messiah. I have knowledge of him,

He is upon the road. It was revealed

To me at Lemberg—thrust into my soul :

My heart was eaten up

With lust for the Messiah, to behold him

Treading the winepress, and to tread it, tread

The winepress with him. Can you tread it
out ?

I come from massacre, from shreds and strips

Of my tormented people . . . where they dwell

Wild beasts are ravening. Cossacks plough their
way

Through the furrows of my people's backs ; and
you

Sent me sleek messages, I should have vengeance.

Your message was delivered, but the Poles

Told me that you were stepping, as a woman

Steps, delicately ; told me of your butter,

Your honey and your cates. But vengeance,

Vengeance must feed us ! Can you give us
vengeance ;

Say, can you tread the press ?

[SABBATAÏ *looks forth blankly.*

SABBATAÏ.

There must be suffering

And patience and forlornness. . . . I will send

Alms to my people—I have riches.

(*In a very gentle voice.*) Prophet,

Let us not be too vehement. In haste

I am preparing to take ship and conquer

The earth. . . . There may be rites, Ephraim

Messiah,

You say, must come—Ephraim with many griefs.

It may be you are he. But enter !

[SABBATAÏ *goes within.*

NEHEMIAH.

Vengeance

Is what I seek and where the law burns red.

[*Showing a back of dogged hostility he moves toward the inner door through which SABBATAÏ has passed. Before NEHEMIAH has reached it, SABBATAÏ springs forth, a pot of clay in his arms.*

SABBATAÏ.

Here is the vessel

Of the sacred prophecy.

*[Setting down the curious old pot and
plunging his hand in it.*

Here is the scroll,

Here is the test you put. . . . Examine it !

You Nathan, Nehemiah, you—two lawyers.

NEHEMIAH. Old is it ? I would see——

SABBATAÏ.

Sit down and wrangle.

*[He throws the scroll on the table ; NEHE-
MIAH savagely holds it up to the light,
then claws it.*

He fastens as an eagle on his prey. . . .

(Turning to the sea.) I could creep off,

And in a little pinnace with my harp

Make melody to God and leave His billows

To waft me on His pleasure. . . .

(Bending over the puzzled, angry heads.) Sorrow !

But these will never be redeemed ; in strife

And bitterness they wander all their days.

NEHEMIAH *(turning back to SABBATAÏ)*. The edges
are too curled ;

The style is cramped. Where was the parchment
found ?

SABBATAÏ. I do not know. The form

Is of an amphora, a tawny-bowled,

Dark vessel, and with wine to cheer the dead.

(To NATHAN.) Was it not in a tomb—do you
remember ?

Yachini found this testament ?

NEHEMIAH.

Yachini !

We know him in the north. From Bosphorus
He sends neat transcripts of the ancient writings
For Christian use.

NATHAN. Out of a tomb,
Closed in a den of unfrequented grass,
It came, Messiah. Abraham Yachini
Was moved within his entrails, deep-inspired
To rending of the ancient turf. Within . . .

SABBATAÏ. Oh, let me read !

(*Pointing at NEHEMIAH.*) Are you a Kabbalist ?

NEHEMIAH. Read to the people—to the French, the
English,

The traders from the north—

And are there any Germans at your court ?

Read—we all listen !

[*He turns the pot slowly round, dipping
his finger in spittle and wetting the
clay,*

SABBATAÏ (*reading*). ‘ I, Ben Abraham,
Shut up for forty years within a cave,
Was sorrowful,
And dreaming in my slumber had no peace
For wonder that the time of miracles
Tarried so long, so long delayed the day
Of restoration ; then a voice broke forth—
One shall be born and speedily, his name
Is Sabbataï ; he shall quell the Dragon,
He is the true Messiah,
He shall wage war—he shall be weaponless.’
I like this prophecy. See, Nehemiah,

You must not ask for vengeance as of blood ;
There must be no blood-shedding.

NEHEMIAH.

But the earth

Must drip with blood, the border of each garment
Must bear it for a rusty hem, before
The chosen people can ride forth as kings ;
And if you are not come to bring a sword
Your coming is no more than yonder flight
Of pigeons in the air.

(*Turning to the people.*) This earth is baked—
New-baked as bread for Sabbath use. This
scripture

Smacks too much of the common tongue.

SABBATAÏ.

It needs

The Kabbala—it needs interpretation,
The living breath of knowledge. What is speech
Without interpretation ? What is knowledge,
If not the interpretation of the wise ?
We have about us earth and sky and ocean—
We are but set in them as animals,
That bark or hinny or get provender,
And cannot re-create the parable,
And have no inkling of the mystery
Of how things shudder and impinge and draw
The universe along by violence,
By stealth, by signs, by deepest machination.
O Nehemiah, you are crude—

NEHEMIAH.

The Scriptures

Are crude . . . I know not ; they are honest
scriptures.

This is a forgery. I tear it up
Before you all, I tread it underfoot,
I spit on it.

*[There are howls of execration. NEHE-
MIAH is roughly handled—the Sab-
bataians close round him.]*

SABBATAÏ. What beasts are these, what beasts !
Unloose the prophet,
Set him aside ! I challenge
His liberty, I challenge all men's acts.
This earthen pot is of a thousand years
Or is of yesterday—all evidence
Is false, all knowledge of the nature
Of the dew or of the manna on the ground.
My Kings, I have taken heart !

[Flinging the earthen pot away.]

We will adventure
Our mystery at once—we will put forth,
You, my musicians, you, my mariners,
And to the sound of music will set sail ;
With ritual will receive the Soldan's crown.
(*To NATHAN.*) Marshal my Kings—advance ! I
am Messiah.

Within the uttermost places of the sea
I prayed ; there was I wrought, and, being human,
Wrought into God ; the Name was wrought in me.
You say I spoke it—that was chance, the action
Was irresistible, was as the waves
That rise and chafe and must be waves against
The wind and rocks, but in themselves are silent

As the sea's floor of sand. I am Messiah.
 The waves supported me ; there was my faith.
 I am Messiah. Men may write false scriptures :
 I am Messiah ! I commend myself
 Once more to the great sea. The Law is done,
 The Law is cast away and by new tracks
 The very stars are guided. I believe !
 Stream with me to the sea. . . . That heretic,
 The verjuice of dissension, that maligner—
 A pest, a Gog or Magog, a shame-faced,
 Convicted leper—oh, escape from him,
 As I escape. . . . Musicians, there is scent
 Of the sea upon my garments.

ZARAH (*at his feet*). There is scent
 And fragrance of the sea.

SABBATAÏ. Follow me, follow !
 Children, I know not whither we shall sail.
 The music is more distant, but it leaps.
 I have knowledge of the sailing ; of the port ;
 I have no further knowledge—Follow me !

*[They all gather to MESSIAH. He leads
 them in procession down the steps to the
 harbour. The musicians descend last
 singing.]*

MUSICIANS. Hail, all hail
 To the golden sail,
 Hail to the Mariner that has no port,
 To the King that has no crown.
 Hail to the spirits free,
 Stretching their sail to the limitless sea !

The hautboys, the shawms and rebecks,
the trumpets' snort,
The triumph, the laughter, the scorn
Round the skiff forlorn
Of the golden sail !
Down, down,
Follow the King that has no crown,
Follow the sail,
Follow the light of its wings on the gale,
Till the night come and the glory fail.

[*All pass out except NAHAN GHAZATI, who picks up the fragments of the scroll and the potsherds close to NEHEMIAH.*]

NEHEMIAH. Hot youth, remain with me.

NATHAN.

Are you Messiah ?

[*Facing NEHEMIAH, who has turned to leave the courtyard in the opposite direction to the harbour.*]

Where are you going ? Do you think to do him a mischief—and he has given you your life and liberty ? But you shall not betray him to the Turk—dog !—you shall not.

[*NEHEMIAH springs aside from the flash of NATHAN'S dagger—then runs across the court, a fugitive.*]

NEHEMIAH. There shall be no false Messiah. I see at last what I am. I have business with the Cadi.

[*NATHAN stares after him, grasping the tattered scroll to his breast, his feet bleeding from the potsherds.*]

ACT III

SCENE I

Constantinople. The Harbour.

A great half-moon has cut its descending pathway through white fog, on which masts, with furled sails, make, as it were, a bowed forest, leaning one way. To the left is the Custom-house, a low building of unpainted wood, with high palisades going down to the water, and patrolled by officers. To the right a camel kneels to be loaded. Officers and soldiers keep coming to and fro from the Custom-house and the last vessel on the right, which is just come to land.

OFFICERS (*among themselves as they pass*). We must wait the Soldan's orders.

Hosts of people

Press round the barrier.

See, that peaked-up turban!

Even jewels are flung over round our heels.

Mustapha Pasha joined the prison-ship

Just off the Dardanelles.

He is within,
Conversing with this traitor.
Listen, listen, listen !
A wail of voices !
Every day, all day
A wail of voices !
Day by day the tempest
Has kept at sea the Infidels' great Prophet.
' Is he coming, is he coming ? ' was our jeer.
The wail of voices—
He is come.

A traitor,
Conspiring for the crown, and yet our Soldan
Would have us treat him with all courtesy.
FROM THE VESSEL. A further guard !
CHIEF OFFICER. Enter ! The Captain beckons.
Enter !

*[Cries : there is a press of Custom-house
officials to the ship. Through them
SABBATAÏ and his jailer SEID come
guarded.]*

SEID. Sit there.

SABBATAÏ (*seating himself on an old chest*). I shall be
glad to sit. How sick I feel,
Oh, I feel ceremoniously unclean !
It is wrong to feel such nausea at the light.
And so this is Stamboul—the Soldan's city.
It lies a coil of chains about the bays.

[Pointing to a height above the Custom-house.]
And what is that ?

SEID. Oh, nothing !

A little execution on the hill.

It is the hour.

SABBATAÏ. No, not for men to die.

They should die with the light, die at the sunset.

SEID. Prophet, then you shall change all this,

And men shall die at a more cordial hour.

There must be executions of deserters,

Renegades, unbelievers : I shall watch them

At sunset. . . . You will make me of your household

When you are Soldan ? I believe in you.

Remember——

SABBATAÏ. You dear Seid !

[He touches his jailer's arm caressingly.]

If I am Soldan . . . that must be to-night.

It is impossible—sweet rush of flame !

What is that murmur, Seid ?

[Rising with dilated nostrils.]

Do I not know it ? Is it not the burthen

Of my people ?

SEID. Surely.

[MUSTAPHA PASHA by the vessel signs to

SEID : they speak together.]

SABBATAÏ. How it wanes, it waxes.

Eternal, I am Chosen of the Earth !

I had oblations, sacrifice wherever

I touched the land, a prisoner ! My vessel

Was bravely trimmed ; I grew to hate the
trappings,

I grew to hate the homage, but persistent
The miracles surrounded me : each day
The prophecies fulfilled themselves like hours.

*(A young Turkish officer stands in front
of him with unapproving eyes.)*

OFFICER. Art thou Messiah ?

SABBATAÏ.

Verily I am.

[He lifts his face and smiles.]

OFFICER *(instantaneously)*. You are, you are . . .

[He turns on his heel.]

SABBATAÏ. O God,

O my Desire, why is it that I worship
Each little impulse in the sand, each striving ?
I know the sea
In its foundation. Thou didst hold me clasped,
Ice-clasped beneath its winter ; in that world,
Eternal, I was with thee and I rose
Creative from thy hand.

Oh, by thy name stamped on my breath and
uttered

Apparent as a writing on the wall—

For my lips moved not and I made no sound,
As the great sea-birds drew themselves together
And rested in high pyramid above—

Do not abandon me, do not desert me !

I cannot draw the people from their faith,
Yet cannot pray.

. . . How acrid cold it is !

(Faintly to SEID who approaches). A cup of coffee !

SEID.

In the Custom-house

They are drinking—I will fetch you one.

[The moon falls into the sea and a long streak of rose steals from the East. Enter ZARAH conducted from the ship. As she comes forward the guard retires a short distance.]

SABBATAÏ.

Beloved,

You are the morning, and your brilliancy
Shows me more wan.

You are arrayed a Queen.

ZARAH. Assuredly. And you—how like a King

I have beheld you as the unrolling clouds
Unrolled their vision to you and discovered
The palace-roof that will be yours to-night.

SABBATAÏ. There, there !—I left you sleeping,
A little pearl of health upon your cheek,
Health in your dreams . . .

[She strokes his forehead.]

My hour is come. Sit down,
Sit by me, Zarah—see, there is a chest ;
And we are King and Queen. They guard us
closely. . . .

Give me your hand. This little fountain-pulse
In the hollow of your hand ! You are exalted.

ZARAH. Belovèd, but your hands are ice of ice.

SABBATAÏ. They must not quiver when I seize the
crown.

(Rising.) I must prepare,
I must make ready : there is nothing ready,
Nothing prepared.

SEID (*approaching with coffee*). A miracle
Never has prelude.

SABBATAÏ. Are you turned Messiah,
And do you know the trick?

(*To ZARAH.*) Why do you walk in jewels?

ZARAH. Does it displease you?

Ill-humoured, Sabbataï, on your day
Of triumph, my great day?

SABBATAÏ. I am very sick.

[SEID *urges him to drink coffee.*]

SEID. See, how the dawn advances, how the city
Reddens and whitens, and the minarets
Have each the little cloud of their own smoke!

SABBATAÏ (*setting down the cup*). I am better—more
Messiah now. O Seid,

This city is a golden bride before me,
And I am amorous—such strange, fantastic,
Terrible, smothered beauty.

ZARAH. All these turrets
Will crumble as the walls of Jericho
Before the trump of God and his Elect.

SABBATAÏ. Break off, break off!
It is not so that it will come to pass.
O beautiful, my city!

ZARAH. Sabbataï,
Your kings . . .

[*The royal followers of SABBATAÏ are
conducted past him in chains.*]

SABBATAÏ. They pass as phantoms of great kings,
And all their caravan a huge mirage.

(*To the kings.*) I will not further test your faith,
O kings;

I have given you dominion, ye are lords
Of Judah, Persia, Araby, Italia—
You shall all reign on thrones when the Messiah
Walketh among you : that has been my promise.
This day it is fulfilled.

[*The kings pass dejected.*

Do they believe ?

Their faces are all turned away from me,
They cannot tell how it shall come to pass,
For there will be a great astonishment
Before the evening star.

[*The mariners pass guarded.*

My mariners !

The stubborn happy faces.
My mariners, I shall not cross the sea,
Never again—but you have made the voyage
Once with the golden sails. Were you not
happy ?

Will there not be a music in your ears,
Ye who make war and carry merchandise ;
A sound that ye have won the victory,
And know your treasure lying at the port ?
Speak to me !

MARINERS. Heigh, a'heigh !

[*They pass.*

SABBATAÏ. I can do this thing,
I can, I shall. That score of glowing faces !

[PRIMO and NATHAN pass.]

PRIMO. O Master, by the Name !

NATHAN. Malka Kadisha !

Now what should be is come, invincible.

Hosanna !

[They pass out.]

SABBATAÏ. The musicians ?

[RUBIO passes.]

ZARAH.

Rubio !

[He blows on his fingers.]

Rubio, he will give us all the world,

As he gave you once a shekel.

[RUBIO still blows on his fingers.]

SABBATAÏ.

The musicians ?

[MUSTAPHA PASHA strolls forward.]

I must have music. . . .

I want it in my limbs. Seid, the musicians !

MUSTAPHA. Your Queen is sent for from the Seraglio,
and your delicious singing-girls, the Soldan's
women that have been your wives. Bid farewell.

SABBATAÏ. Protect her.

MUSTAPHA. She is under protection of his exalted
Majesty.

ZARAH. I am safe as in God's bosom, Sabbataï.

Awake, beloved, awake !

[She is led out with the other women.]

SABBATAÏ.

I must have music.

The players on the instruments

Have not passed by ?

MUSTAPHA.

They are within the vessel,

A band of eunuchs will be sent to fetch them

To the Seraglio.

SABBATAÏ. I would see the Soldan.

MUSTAPHA. Patience ! We still await the royal guard. [*He goes into the Custom-house.*]

SABBATAÏ. Seid, fetch me biscuits. . . . I have little power,

If I should famish . . . all the fire falls out.

A pound or two . . . if they should famish me,

You saw it, I grow sad.

[*SEID slips away. SABBATAÏ gazes dreamily in a tide pool.*]

The little emerald minnows. . . .

How beautiful !

[*He ceases to watch the pool and is arrested by the barricade. A hand comes holding a piece of coral ; then some dates are thrown over with a thud on the ground : later, a costly handkerchief is raised on a stick, but flutters down on the further side.*]

My people !

[*SEID returns.*]

SEID. Master ! the biscuits—swift !

[*SABBATAÏ stuffs them in his wide Turkish trousers.*]

Mustapha Pasha !

[*MUSTAPHA re-enters.*]

MUSTAPHA. Are you disturbed ?

[*Some one sings in Hebrew from the crowd.*]

You have made the people happy, you have made the Soldan unhappy—we must reverse all this.

SABBATAÏ. Conduct me to the Soldan.

MUSTAPHA. It is early yet. On rising his exalted Majesty receives you. Smoke !

SABBATAÏ. I will smoke with you.

[MUSTAPHA PASHA *seats himself on the other chest.* SABBATAÏ *smokes the offered chibouque in silence.*

MUSTAPHA. Doubtless he brews charms. How the delay is harassing him—how his eyebrows twitch !
(*His tongue in his cheek.*) Are you Messiah ?

SABBATAÏ. O sir, you will comprehend—the people rate me thus.

MUSTAPHA. And you have not conspired against the Soldan ? The city is about you as you were lord of the city, and you have a retinue of kings.

SABBATAÏ (*laughing softly*). They have not armour nor bright weapons, nor chains heavy as these chains. They can inflict no punishment.

MUSTAPHA. The base knave deserts his followers ! —what are you then, what trade do you follow ? And what meant those fancy ships in the harbour of Smyrna, with their silken sails ? Were they laden with treasure for the Soldan ? Do you acknowledge him and do you bear him tribute ; do you bear him slaves and singing-girls ?

SABBATAÏ. I have sailed in the mystic vessel. I was about to sail. The Cadi of Smyrna has in nothing thwarted my purpose.

MUSTAPHA (*laughing uncomfortably*). In nothing ! You sailed with your kings, with your delicious

singing-girls, with your train of beggars, with your refuse and scum of the nations you deceived. . . .

[The camel rises that has been loading from the vessel.

We have transported the greater part of your pageantry. Look, little master, that has all been accumulated by you for the Soldan. It is tribute, you will have honoured welcome.

[A shipload of slaves is being landed from another vessel ; they are marched past under the whip.

Is he mad ? What excites him, what has he seen ? Is it the camel that drops with his golden throne ? The camel drops and the chair is broken. Bah ! and such a trophy !

[He turns to the little crowd gathered about the struggling camel. The slaves are driven up the shore. One of them struck by the whip, stretches her arms toward SABBATAÏ, who has risen with such violent agitation, he breaks his chains.

SABBATAÏ (*lifting his freed arms*). If to this band, I am indeed Thy Chosen.

[After a while his hands drop.

They pass. . . . My chains are broken off. O Seid, Go after them . . .

SEID.

Dear Master,

But this is not the miracle. The slaves

Must pass in fetters. Any slave you choose

To-night is yours ; but now—

The moment ! Oh, consider and take thought
Of your own Majesty.

*[A captain with a band of Spahis enters
through the Custom-house door. MUS-
TAPHA PASHA turns to receive the
soldiers.]*

I am his jailer :
I have not freed him, and behold him free.

*[A stripling is lifted up by the crowd to
overlook the court.]*

MUSTAPHA. He is a prophet !

THE CAPTAIN. And it is the hour . . .

[Suddenly the barricade is broken down.]

VOICES. He has freed himself !

He is Messiah—we

In his power have broken free !

*[The Spahis form against the people,
flashing their weapons.]*

SABBATAÏ (*looking at the people*). You must not follow
me. Go home ! Continue

To wait for the Messiah—a long hope,

As hope for the Eternal must be long.

Go home ! Wherever

I am, ye are my bread in banishment,

My secret fountain : I am fed of you,

My people—in the desert I am yours.

Go home !

*[He watches the mournful crowd passing
back through the broken barricade.]*

SEID (*touching his elbow*). The Soldan——

SABBATAÏ.

Ah, I had forgotten !

The Soldan—he is nothing. . . . I am nothing.

But I will pray for these ; and as Messiah

I will pray for them. I am their Messiah,

And they have broke my chains.

*[He watches them still as obediently they
disappear : then he turns to the infidels.*

My jailer ! You,

(To MUSTAPHA.) Be mute of this ; and give me a
full guard.*[He listlessly heads the little company of
Spahis, followed by the captain, SEID,
and MUSTAPHA PASHA.*

SCENE II

*Constantinople.**The Court of the SOLDAN. White and red alternate
arches make a semicircle in the midst of which a
dim carpet, beyond price, is suspended behind the
throne of the SOLDAN : a similar carpet is stretched
at the foot. Between every arch a black eunuch
stands like a bronze grotesque.**The SOLDAN MOHAMMED IV. is crowned and robed in
state. On one side of him stands the MUFTI
VANNI, on the other the GRAND VIZIR, AHMED
COPRILI. NEHEMIAH COHEN kneels before him
dressed as a Turk in green robe and white turban.*

THE SOLDAN. You are seeking vengeance . . .

NEHEMIAH.

Even as the lord Mahommed

Would ever with the sword,
Ever with vengeance, smite God's enemies.

THE SOLDAN. You are seeking vengeance : and our
throne is safe.

Eh, Mufti Vanni ?

NEHEMIAH. While a Jew receives
The tribute of all lands—Egypt, Morocco,
Italy, Holland, Austria . . . ?

THE SOLDAN (*nudging the MUFTI VANNI*). And by
night

Dreams thievishly of putting on my crown
To the flourish of his trumpets and his shawms.
We will receive him
With honour as a mystic traveller,
Supplied with divinations to attract
And hurry our desires to our feet.

NEHEMIAH (*rising*). He is an arch-corrupter : Moslem
drink

Forbidden wine, Jews eat forbidden flesh,
And sacred fasts are loosened from their dearth.
Grand seignior, ever clement to our race,
Though I have bitter wrongs, I am not pleading
Their vengeance—I reveal a secret plot,
Remote, widespread, yet beating at your doors,
To dispossess your sacred Majesty.

THE SOLDAN. A charmer—
A little ill-famed Jew of such account !
Is the man mad ? Is he beloved as madmen
Who free their passion to a million hearts
That whirl the frantic dance in unison ?

If so . . . Ahmed Coprilli, tell me

Do you find the city moved ?

COPRILI.

My lord, O Soldan,

The city is in motion : love so surges

At this expected advent of a prophet

Called by the Jews Messiah.

THE SOLDAN.

Troublesóme

Are chatterers with titles !

NEHEMIAH.

Ho, but this man is silent

In such a way that all pronounce his name

And his seditious honours on the breath

Of his stupendous silentness.

THE SOLDAN.

Still waters,

They say, run deep. Do you find the crowd's
commotion

Profound or shallow, Ahmed ?

COPRILI.

It is inward,

At crisis : for the people

Are moved by wonder and belief in wonder,

So that a storm is simply held in leash

By admiration.

THE SOLDAN.

If we torture him,

Preluding death . . .

COPRILI,

My lord, O Soldan, death

Would loose the currents of disturbance, resting

At poise on wonder—death

Is peril to your throne. Delay his death.

NEHEMIAH. Kill him, O Soldan. Allah bless the deed,

And Allah's prophet ! In the solitude

Of walls and distance from your feverish streets,

Whip him with flaming scourges,
Impale him mid-most of mid-palace courts,
Let him die gagged, and howling through his mind
His body's anguish.

THE MUFTI VANNI. Son of wisdom, listen
In no wise to this Jewish convertite,
Whose tooth for Allah's enemies is ranker
Than mine, even mine.

Before the penalty
Of execution on a criminal,
Let us, if so we may,
Convert this mad, seditious person. Urge him
With reasons, bribe him. . . . You are paymaster
Worth a knave's tale: or threaten him—you
strike

Far deeper with a menace than with sentence.
Smile on the culprit, beat him with the frown
That opens pinion on your brow at whiles ;
Point to the executioners, demand
The Adan. Kill this mad, seditious person,
His teaching and his followers will remain.
If we can bring him into Islam, then
He is discredited from alien homage,
Mohammed is enlarged and Allah praised.

*[While the MUFTI VANNI has been speaking
the Chief of the Eunuchs has ushered in
musicians who stand in a half-circle on
each side of the SOLDAN'S throne, tuning
their instruments. A Eunuch sweeps
aside the curtain.]*

THE SOLDAN. Our visitor is in the doorway. Allah !
This little, black-garbed creature is God's prophet !
. . . Handsome. . . . The eyes attempt our sym-
pathy
With the first glance.

SABBATAÏ *enters*

Lay cushions for our guest.

SABBATAÏ. I do not know the reverences due
To the grand seignior. I would keep all forms
To his exalted Majesty.

THE CHIEF EUNUCH. Salaam

Three times. [SABBATAÏ *does as bidden.*

THE SOLDAN. Be seated, Sabbataï Zevi,
Unless

(*With a smile.*) You would approach me to my face,
And lift this symbol from my head. Musicians,
You see, are at your service, if you choose
The air that shall discrown me. There are
shawms,

Trumpets wide-mouthed, and harps and psalteries
too !

Also I am awaiting you. My circlet
Is very rich—its gems surpass your jewels.
Add them to yours, charming successor ! Snatch
them !

Hear ! All the instruments are tuning. Come,
The tune, your hands about my head ! . . .

. . . A guest,
His countenance shows us unmannerly

To listen to such tales as folk will spin
At the street corners, at the harbour moorings.
(*To the musicians.*) Hush, hush ! Your thrills are
inconvenient,
Our audience given to Sabbataï Zevi
Will not, it seems, be musical.

[*At a waft of his hands the drooping
musicians are conducted out.*

Sweet doctor
Of strange religion, are you the Messiah
The Jews await ? Believe me I would learn.
SABBATAÏ (*from his cushions*). If there are any oracles
within

The human spirit of true voice, I was.
THE SOLDAN. But now, now in our presence ?
[SABBATAÏ *is silent.*
You confess

Imposture by your silence.
SABBATAÏ (*half to himself*). Once a Rabbi
Laughed at the jackals round the holy ruins,
The ruins of Jerusalem : he knew
The desolation must all come to pass
Before the promise.

THE SOLDAN. Then you are Messiah ?
SABBATAÏ (*sitting forward, with waving hands*).
I was called—and I have waited for the sign.
So I was called that marvels have been done
About me—all the countries have been living
Heart against my heart ; all the countries—
England,

And Germany and Spain—all far away,
Have quivered with my ecstasy. O Soldan,
I was not born to glory, but the coffers
Of merchant cities, outpoured at my feet,
Have made me boundless in magnificence.
A messenger come from Jerusalem,
To bear repentant homage to me, staggered
Beneath the salver of rewarding coins.
In all ways I have lived as you are living,
The graces of command on every moment,
The splendour of an empire on each day.
The sun has looked upon my pageantry ;
The moon has whitened palaces
Where I have slept ; the stars across the darkness
Have not outnumbered those that worship me.
With chains about my wrists,
I have lured forth of men their eagerness
To give me gifts, to listen to the message
Which is the message I am called of God.
The very sea has crouched as a meek dog
Beneath my prayer. Is it not marvellous ?
Tell me, O Soldan ! And the prophets come
Within the limit of my hallowed vision—
The antique prophets.
I have beheld Elijah with these eyes,
Antique Elijah risen up :
And men have seen live fire upon my forehead,
They have heard rhythmical upon my voice,
Disturbing awe, the Name no man may utter.
O Soldan, surely I was called of God.

THE SOLDAN. See, Mufti Vanni, here is radiance—
beauty

Become persuasion, beauty
On common lineaments a smile, on these
A light that opens. Sabbataï Zevi,
You have a voice that pleases ; I would hear it
When sleeping on my cushions after prayer.
Your hands are exquisite and delicate ;
They draw hallucination with their swaying,
Till trust in you is as a mystery.

You are persuaded of yourself and half
Your lustre and attraction win the slackness
Even of my credence . . . but I need a sign.
(*To the Chief Eunuch.*) Order my archers in. . . .
(*To SABBATAÏ.*) Nay, do not rise,
My guest, my fellow Sultan ; at your leisure
Wait the proposal of my thought.

[*The archers are ushered in.*]
Archers, your weapons tense for action !

(*To the Chief Eunuch.*) Range them
Half-circled like our Golden Horn without.

[*They stand on each side the throne, their
bows bent.*]

Now Sabbataï Zevi, if indeed
You are of God, substantially divine,
Allow my eunuchs freedom
To strip you and my archers to let loose
Their arrows on your body. I demand
A miracle, with flesh and blood for proof.
Then if the level flight of missiles turn

From drinking at their aim, and if you stand
With silver face of light that opens—Soldan
Mohammed is your subject King, and lowly
Takes off his crown in silence to your power ;
He owns the Jews' religion and Messiah.
Rise, you have yet your diadem to win.

Rise ! [SABBATAÏ *does as bidden.*

Eunuchs strip him !

[*As they advance, SABBATAÏ covers his face, praying.*

SABBATAÏ.

O my God, my God,

Descend on me invulnerable, show me

Thy Chosen. . . . Do not leave me here
alone.

Do not forsake me !

[*He suddenly uncovers his eyes and fixes them wide on the archers. All the Moslems breathe low and bend forward. His lips move and he recoils.*

(*Under his breath.*) Arrows . . . but the points. . .
And who shall stay them ?

[*The Eunuchs begin to remove his clothes.*

No, no, no !

Do not bare me, God-forsaken . . . not that
shame !

THE SOLDAN. Confess, you have blasphemed—or
take your choice

To bid my archers—shoot.

[*There is profound silence, then a sob is heard.*

You have blasphemed.

[With a creak all the arrows are unstrung and the archers begin to laugh as they see the SOLDAN laugh. At the sound of the jeers SABBATAÏ presses his breast as if struck, while he weeps with closed eyes.]

Our beauty is in cloud !

O man, confess

Allah is great. Where are your wonders now ?

The false compulsion of your shining ? Dusk

Is on the air we breathe. Allah is great.

A cloud is over us, O man !

NEHEMIAH.

Where falls

The branch there it shall lie.

THE SOLDAN.

What would you tell us ?

SABBATAÏ. Let me go forth. . . . There are many
seas around. . . .

To wander in the heat . . .

THE SOLDAN.

You are condemned.

You stand here a blasphemer, proved

Deep in imposture. There is punishment

For these offences, and to them is added

Sedition. I condemn you, and exact

Another miracle.

SABBATAÏ (*lifting his hands*). Drag me no more

Amid the dogs and mire ! A miracle !

Have you not laughed that all was as it was.

A miracle !

THE SOLDAN. One that a man may do.

You must confess Mohammed.

SABBATAÏ.

I refuse.

If I refuse . . . ?

THE SOLDAN.

At the Seraglio gate

The stake is planted that shall raise you up

To die, that handsome head left without mercy

To brood upon the agony it tops.

Before extremity of punishment

You will be flogged with torch-twined rods that
scorch you,

And sting together, Then you will lament

You kept my archers idle.

SABBATAÏ.

Renegade !

THE SOLDAN. Forsaken of your God ! . . .

Your lips are white as the door of the Mosque at
Eyoub.

SABBATAÏ.

The archers. . . .

Their arrows !

[*Again the half-circle laughs.*]

THE SOLDAN. You are weak to dream of pity.

Neither a sword nor arrows, but the stake,

And fiery rods to goad your nakedness.

SABBATAÏ. I am so weary. What do you desire ?

That I should change religion for religion,

My race for yours ? Is it a Turk you ask

I should become ?

THE SOLDAN.

Please God !

SABBATAÏ.

I am alone

In all the lands, among all peoples. . . .

(*Falling on the cushions.*) And even

In death I shall go down in it alone.

Outcast !

THE SOLDAN. The woman—

Your Queen—will suffer deep in solitude,
When you are raised upon the pike—her death
Strangling, and the way to death a rack.

[SABBATAÏ *springs up with a maddened
gesture, and rends the hem of his black robe.*

SABBATAÏ. My God. . . . My people !

The dream, the dream !

Savage—this place—this crowd, this foreign
country

Where I have no existnece . . .

THE SOLDAN.

Sabbataï,

We worship the one God ; the antique prophets
Are to the Turk as to the Jew.

Rich state has been about you : my rich state
Surrounds my servants and my wealth is theirs
In no unstinted measure. I am held

A generous paymaster. You please me well,
And often through the hours I would encounter
Your gentle and imperious face.

SABBATAÏ (*glancing sidelong at the SOLDAN*). I lived

Too softly. . . . [He laughs.

Foolish dreams !—Will you employ me ? . . .

Hou ! [He groans and begins to shiver.

THE SOLDAN. Wisdom, Sabbataï,

Controls all discord in the bounds of Fate :

The inevitable should be calm.

[SABBATAÏ *stands irresolute.*

(To MUFTI VANNI.) A mystic,

But now an unbeliever, and the mind

Only a sorrowing sport of vacancy !—
Listen !

*[From the minarets of the city comes the cry
of the Muézzin.]*

VOICES. God is great : there is no God but God :
Mahommed is God's prophet.

*(The SOLDAN'S prayer-mat is spread ; he
and all his Court murmur the midday
prayers. SABBATAÏ is arrested. Then
a look, at once frightened and profound,
comes into his face : he bows his head
and prostrates himself. When the
prayers are over SABBATAÏ still remains
prostrate.)*

THE SOLDAN *(returning to his throne)*. The Jew has
prayed with us. Rise, Sabbataï.

[SABBATAÏ does as bidden.]

SABBATAÏ. God is great : there is no God but God :
Mohammed is his prophet.

*[Throwing down his black Jewish turban,
he stands as if a burthen had been loosed
from him.]*

THE SOLDAN. Praise to Allah !

Now let the cloak of green and the white turban
Clothe him entire for our religion, make him
Compatriot and fellow-worshipper.

Ah, you think well. Mohammed is God's prophet,
Attested by the ages, by the wonders
Of death-like trance, by faith that wove God's
glory

Through life unbroken.

Be my doorkeeper.

You shall not lack gold : as you will, your wages
In any kind my treasurer shall pay.

And I shall see you often as I pass.

You will receive the turban, the green mantle—

Will you not ?

SABBATAÏ. Yes, exalted Majesty.

[They dress him as a Turk.]

THE SOLDAN. Will you receive of me your Turkish
name,

My choosing ?

SABBATAÏ. Yes, exalted Majesty.

THE SOLDAN. Mehmed Effendi—and a favourite.

THE MUFTI VANNI. Mehemed

Effendi, I will teach you in the Mosque

The true religion of God's chosen prophet,

In my Mosque 'The Splendour.' Allah's be all
praise !

THE SOLDAN. Your wife shall be restored—Fauma
Effendi

Her name : she shall have presents

From the Sultana's hand.

[He rises and moves down the room.]

Open the curtain.

Await her.

SABBATAÏ. Yes, exalted Majesty.

THE SOLDAN. Be happy in my service ! Half a
saint,

May the Great Prophet give you Heaven at last !

SABBATAÏ (*his hand on the curtain*). What am I ?

On the branches of Life's Tree
Are many apples sound and beautiful.
If I am dropped and lie beneath the shadows,
Who glowed once in the sun, still other apples
Burthen the boughs. I should be comforted,
Laid safe within the shadow. God is great,
And glows and ripens on His favourites,
As this Mohammed. I will give God praise.

[White as death, he holds the curtain while the SOLDAN passes, and taps his cheek, and gives him a nod and smile of approbation. NEHEMIAH, unseen, stoops, picks up SABBATAÏ's black turban and hides it under his green cloak. When the Court has passed out, SABBATAÏ drops the curtain and turns back into the room, facing the SOLDAN's throne.]

Am I not praising God, praising His prophet,
And taking on His partiality ?
And yet I could have praised God in a way
More perfect, if my heart were not confused.
I could (*widely extending his arms*) have taken the
arrows in a sheaf,
And fallen and left the arrows for His choice,
And for His judgment over me—my God !

[He buries his face ; then suddenly looks out at the Church of St. Sophia, visible against the sky.]

How bright the Cross is burning on yon
dome !

God favoured that sad Prophet. Very gladly
I would have died to be accepted so.

How should I die ? I had no part in dying,
I was called onward by a crown of sapphires.

To lure my people to their happiness

Was my sole task, sole strain. But God is
great,

Mohammed is His prophet. God be praised !

*[He sinks down on the cushions, and, closing
his eyes, breathes as if asleep. Eunuchs
shamble about. After a while a tall,
black Eunuch opens the curtain and
ZARAH enters.]*

ZARAH. Wake, Sabbataï. We are dreaming. Help
me !

SABBATAÏ (*with closed eyes*). I cannot. God is great.
I testify

Mohammed is His prophet.

ZARAH. Sabbataï,

You have betrayed me.

SABBATAÏ (*opening his eyes*). I am like a woman

Who dreamt she was beloved, and to the core

Of a lover's heart ; who made this dream her
life,

Breathing it with the secrecy of breathing ;

Who found. . . . But, O belovèd, as that
woman

You are not. You are all to me, my chosen !

Will you be even as God, and cast me off ?

[ZARAH *lets her long hair fall over his feet
as she kisses them. He looks out with
wide, dreaming eyes.*

If God should cling thus—if this woe should be
The land of Egypt, the Captivity !

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